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# ANIMAL IMAGERY IN THE POETRY OF MARIANNE MOORE

by

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled Animal Imagery in the Poetry of Marianne Moore, submitted by Nora B. Pangalo in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploratory study on the uses of animal life in Marianne Moore's poetic "observations." In Chapter I discussion will focus on the technical and thematic implications of Miss Moore's use of the animal image in detailed description and metaphor. A close reading of selected poems will be made. Chapter II will compare and contrast Miss Moore's method with those of the fabulist and the bestiarist with whom the tradition of putting animal life to literary use is usually associated. This consideration of the particulars of Miss Moore's employment of animal imagery in the first two chapters will then open the way to a discussion in Chapter III of the general features of Miss Moore's animal poetry which will eventually bring in the matter of the aesthetics of this contemporary American poet who holds that poets must be

> "literalists of
> the imagination-- above
> insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, "imaginary gardens with real toads in them."

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# INTRODUCTION

A reader of Marianne Moore's published poems--even if he is only scanning through--would most likely notice the considerable number of poems involving animals. It is said that "88% of her published poems do."[1] Cleanth Brooks speaks of "a solemn study on animals in modern poetry" and presumes that the poetry of Marianne Moore was included in the statistics. "Miss Moore's poetry was certainly capable of furnishing more animals than any three of the other poets combined."[2] If only for sheer frequency alone, the importance of animals in Miss Moore's poetry cannot be denied. Her poetic menagerie includes: animals with thick hides, scales and thorns (plumet basilisk, buffalo, pangolin, wood weasel, elephant, hedgehog, and porcupine); fowls (frigate pelican, peacock, ostrich); sea animals (fish, snail, paper nautilus, jellyfish, octopus); domestics (cat, race horse, pony); insects like the dragonfly and the katydid; and such exotic miscellany as the jerboa, snakes and mongooses, sea unicorns and land unicorns, the dragon, the chamelon, the arctic ox, and the giraffe.

This thesis proposes to make an inquiry into the essence and function of the animal imagery in Marianne Moore's poems. It contends that since much of Marianne Moore's major poems involves

animal associations, a study of animal imagery in these poems is essential to the understanding and appreciation of a great bulk of Miss Moore's poetry. Many readers have expressed puzzlement over Miss Moore's poetry. The following comment is symptomatic:

> A Marianne Moore poem must be walked round slowly--parts picked up, handled, mused on, laid back--then the whole thing walked round again--and again.[3]

There is no sure way out of this puzzlement, but hopefully, an approach to Marianne Moore's animal poems through the imagery will be helpful.

By way of definition, an image, as it will be understood throughout this thesis, is a word picture with emotional connotations and/or dramatic or symbolic overtones. As Caroline Spurgeon observes "few people would entirely agree as to what constitutes an image and still fewer as to what constitutes a poetic image,"[4] and therefore all animal associations, similes, and metaphors are considered within the scope of this study on imagery.

Related studies include one which has been made on the whole of Marianne Moore's imagery in a Ph. D. dissertation entitled "The Imagery of Marianne Moore" by Ralph Rees from Pennsylvania State University. It lists six varieties of Marianne Moore's multiple and complex images. Another Ph. D. dissertation, Sister Mary Carey's "The Poetry of Marianne Moore: A Study of Her Verse, Its Sources

and Its Influence" also discusses in part Miss Moore's use of animal life in her poetry, but as the title shows, it also touches on many other aspects of Miss Moore's poetry which is outside the scope of this thesis. This thesis will deal as exclusively as is possible with animal imagery.

Cleanth Brooks in "Miss Marianne Moore's Zoo" attempts to prove that Miss Moore's use of animal associations is "a variant. . . peculiarly her own" from the "general function" of providing "the perspective through which to see our (and her) finally human world."[5] Examples cited are "Elephants," "The Wood Weasel," and "The Jerboa." This thesis proposes to be more detailed in its examination of Miss Moore's "variant" from "the general function" as well as to suggest other uses and aspects of Miss Moore's poetic menagerie which Brooks does not discuss in his short essay.

Discussion in the first chapter will center on the descriptive and metaphoric use of animal life in Miss Moore's poetry. The method is exploratory and may involve close analyses of technique and theme of some of Miss Moore's animal poems. An attempt is made here to illustrate by detailed examples the wide range of associations and effects from the few instances of the near-traditional to the more prevalent grotesque imagery that reveals a highly individual perspective which does not submit to standardization or

neat explications. The poems are made to speak for themselves and a minimum of extraneous material will be brought in.

The second chapter will attempt to ascertain whether Miss Moore's treatment of the animal world is the method of such recognized literary traditions which use animals for subjects and exemplars as the fable and the bestiary. A consideration of Miss Moore's translation of the fables of La Fontaine might be relevant at this point. It would be interesting to note that she draws her material on animals from the legends of bestiary and fable as well as from scientific fact. Two questions may be profitably raised here. Is the method of Miss Moore a kind of sentimentalizing of Nature as implied by Randall Jarrell when he says, "Because so much of our world is evil, she has transformed the animal kingdom, that amoral realm, into a realm of good"?[6] Or is it an effecting of a thematic and structural unity, the didactic point of which is there, nevertheless, but not the sole point as it would be in fable? The discussion may include a detailed observation of the stylistic devices and the structures peculiar to the methods compared and contrasted.

The last chapter will dwell on the subject of Miss Moore's animal imagery in relation to her aesthetics. In one of her poems on poetry, she says that poets should be

'literalists of
the imagination'--above
insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, 'imaginary gardens with real toads in them'.
(CP, p. 41)

One important point to be raised here is the precision, scientific accuracy, and "literalness" of the poet's imagination. The "harde yron" of encyclopedic facts is digested and the imagination is brought to play on them. Sample comparisons between the scientific statement and Miss Moore's poetic statement, both based on the same fact would illustrate the difference between "the raw material of poetry in/all its rawness" and "the genuine" (CP, p. 41). Perhaps, with this method, the essence of "the genuine" in Miss Moore's poetry can be brought to light.

To define one's aims more clearly, one must go into the poems themselves. The conclusions, or tentative theories, will be drawn later, if these have to be made.

# CHAPTER I

## THE DESCRIPTIVE AND METAPHORIC USE OF ANIMAL IMAGERY

Cleanth Brooks in "Miss Marianne Moore's Zoo" asserts that Miss Moore's preoccupation with animals is significant and tells more than that she is an accurate observer. He says further that Miss Moore's birds and beasts "provide the perspective through which to see our (and her) finally human world," admittedly "a general function," in our literary tradition, of which Miss Moore's is "a variant. . . peculiarly her own."[1] This chapter proposes to examine Miss Moore's particular "variant" from the "general function."

To bring this "variant" to light, one starts with an exploration of what seems to be the most prevalent uses of animal life in Miss Moore's poetry: sensuous, usually visual, description and metaphor. Where it is possible, the discussion is limited solely to animal images but by no means does this imply that such images operate exclusively in a poem. In so far as imagery goes, plants, "objets d'art," geometric figures, antiques and man-made artifices, instruments, and music are important images in Marianne Moore's poetry

too and an appreciation of such may involve an awareness of the interaction of these images. However, the focus on animal imagery is insisted upon, if only to avoid a diffuseness which might become too unwieldy. The intention here is to go to the poems themselves and look into the technical and thematic implications of the animal imagery in them, hoping that in doing so, one does not give the impression of setting limits to the power and discoveries of the poetic imagination. Rather, one observes and comments upon effects and results--though always aware that Miss Moore's poetry is delightfully resistant to firm categorization.

An examination of the descriptive and metaphoric uses of animals in Miss Moore's poetry reveals a wide range of associations and effects. One can take passages in isolation and find the animal associations in them indicative of the poet's eye for minute detail and skill in concrete, usually visual, description. The animal image may become part of a compound descriptive adjective, simple examples of which are Miss Moore's terms for colors: peacock blue and guinea grey (CP, p. 13),[2] frog-greys and duck-egg greens (CP, p. 18), dragon-fly blue (CP, p. 58), oyster white (CP, p. 71). She speaks of "a sea the purple of a peacock's neck" (CP, p. 13). This use of the animal to visualize colors could assume an importance in the poem

beyond the literal level or the level of simple figuration.

A case in point is the use of mouse-grey as the color of the elephant. The utilization of the mouse in the description of the elephant may at once suggest a grotesque incongruity. However, as one goes through "Elephants," the mouse-elephant image appears less and less farfetched. Though the poem begins with the trunks of two elephants twined in a "deadlock of dyke-enforced massiveness," the reader is immediately told that this is not "a knock-down drag-out fight that asks no quarter" but "just a pastime" (CP, p. 129). More comparisons or description involving apparently grotesque contrasts continue the implications set by the image of mouse-grey elephants. One elephant sleeps "with the calm of youth" cradling on his belly his

> mahout, asleep like a lifeless six-foot
> frog, so feather light the elephant's stiff
> ear's unconscious of the crossed feet's weight. And the
> defenceless human thing sleeps as sound as if
>
> incised with hard wrinkles, embossed with wide ears,
> invincibly tusked, made safe by magic hairs!
> (CP, p. 129)

In a procession to Buddha's temple, the elephant is the obedient beast which carries on a cushion Buddha's Tooth to the shrine. "Amenable" to men, his "gnat trustees"

> he does not step on them as the white
> canopied blue-cushioned Tooth is augustly
> and slowly returned to the shrine.
> (CP, p. 130)

The elephant is "a life prisoner but reconciled" and as such invites contrast with man who is nervous with

> As if, as if, it is all ifs; we are at
> much unease.
> (CP, p. 129)

The elephant "resisted, but is the child of reason now." This last statement in turn invites an affiliation of Socrates' tranquillity with the equanimity that is "contrived by the elephant." The elephant is thus "the Socrates of animals" whose

> sweetness tinctures
> his gravity. His held up fore-leg for use
>
> as a stair, to be climbed or descended with
> the aid of his ear.
> (CP, pp. 130-131)

This last observation on the elephant invites finally a human reference. The elephant "expounds the brotherhood of creatures to man the encroacher."

> These knowers 'arouse the feeling that they are
> allied to man' and can change roles with their trustees.
> (CP, p. 131)

The concluding lines run:

> Who rides on a tiger can never dismount;
> asleep on an elephant, that is repose.
> (CP, p. 131)

Seen in the light of the whole poem thus, "mouse-grey" as color for the elephant is not, after all, an image, the incongruity of which is used merely to startle, but is an essential detail in the poet's method

of controlling tone.

More examples of effective and sometimes grotesquely arresting juxtaposition involve animal-plant associations such as those made in the "porcupine-quilled palm trees" (CP, p. 30), or the strawberry which is "a hedgehog or a starfish for the multitude of seeds" (CP, p. 127), on the one hand; or the pangolin-artichoke identification (CP, p. 118 ff.), "the elephant's columbine-tubed trunk" (CP, p. 105), "the lion's ferocious chrysanthemum head" (CP, p. 88) on the other. In the last two examples, the association established between the jungle animal and the garden plant suggests the obliteration by the imagination of the apparent incongruity between the jungle world and the domestic world, with some of the domesticity and ordinariness of the garden plant rubbing off on the elephant and the lion, and the wildness and ferocity of the beast on the chrysanthemum. The effect is especially apparent if the phrases are put in context. "The lion's ferocious chrysanthemum head" seems "kind" compared to the "porcupine-quilled complicated starkness" of a curio, "a monkey puzzle" which the poet came upon in some "morose part of the earth." In "Smooth Gnarled Crape Myrtle" from which the other phrase is taken, the lines run:

An aspect may deceive; as the
elephant's columbine-tubed trunk
held waveringly out--
an at will heavy thing--is
delicate.

(CP, pp. 105-106)

In the metaphorical use of animals to depict men, the effects range from simple caricature to the more complex congruence-in-disparity image. The use of the animal image for caricature purposes is, however, a rare case in Miss Moore's poetry. In fact, only two clear examples can be cited. In a stinging satire against "novices" among writers, Miss Moore calls the suave and prolific writers "the supertadpoles of expression" (CP, p. 67). The metaphor brings to mind Miss Moore's derision of the obsolete musician whose "charming tadpole notes belong to the past when one had time to play them" (CP, pp. 58-59). Caricature is also obvious in enumeration of the literary acquaintances the poet had known twenty years back:

THE MONKEYS

winked too much and were afraid of snakes. The zebras,
supreme in
their abnormality; the elephants with their fog-coloured
skin
and strictly practical appendages
were there, the small cats; and the parrakeet--
trivial and humdrum on examination, destroying
bark and portions of the food it could not eat.

(CP, p. 44)

In many other examples, however, the animal image heightens a peculiar feature of a man or of men but not for the sake of ludicrous distortion as such. Rather than intentional satire, the image effects a striking visual depiction of an abstract human quality. In a non-satirical vein, Miss Moore speaks of writers and critics thus: Moliere is "the golden jay," "the peacock of France" whose "broad tail was unfurled" for the "chief interest" and "spontaneous delight" of the world (CP, p. 92); the critic Burke is "a psychologist--of acute raccoon-like curiosity" (CP, p. 52); the poet, in his constant reassessment of reality, is "like the ant and the spider returning from time to time to headquarters" (CP, p. 66). The animal image may also take functions other than mere description, in which case it becomes two-dimensional, and in some instances, many-faceted. For instance, the pilgrim settlers who took the Potomac are laconically described as "cowbirdlike" (CP, p. 111). Considering that the cowbird builds no nest but lays its eggs in the nest of other birds, one notes then that the poet is not merely describing but expressing an attitude as well; in short, the term not only describes but also renders tone. To cite another example, the woman in the poem "Marriage," says of the man:

> This butterfly,
> this waterfly, this nomad
> that has "proposed
> to settle on my hand for life". --
> What can one do with it?
> (CP, pp. 75-76)

Besides its obvious descriptive function, the insect imagery projects the tension inherent in this paradoxical situation of the unsettled settling for life. Also, the woman's imaging of man in terms of common insects reveals her selfish diminution of his stature, a mental posture which finds explicit expression in

> She loves herself so much
> she cannot see herself enough--
> (CP, p. 76)

In some poems, an effect is produced by a curious composite of metaphors. In "Blue Bug," a "gibbon-like" Chinese acrobat (TMTM, p. 26) and the dancer Arthur Mitchell, "a slim dragonfly too rapid for the eye to cage" (TMTM, p. 27), are brought together to serve as metaphors of a polo pony--Blue Bug, "bug brother to an Arthur Mitchell dragonfly" (TMTM, p. 25). In "Baseball and Writing," Miss Moore brings together the two subjects in which she admits an "inordinate interest": animals and athletes (MMR, p. xvi). She singles out ball players with animal metaphors. Elston Howard is the catcher "with the cruel puma paw" whose "spring de-winged a bat swing" (TMTM, p. 28). That a pun is intended on the word "bat" is clear in that a later line reads:

> You would infer
> that the bat had eyes.
> (CP, p. 29)

The implication of a predator-prey struggle in the metaphor for Elston Howard is continued in the description of Mickey Mantle

leaping like the devil"--why
gild it, although deer sounds better--
snares what was speeding towards its treetop nest,
(CP, p. 29)

Ball is bird and the player, a trapper. The spontaneous predator-prey struggle implied in the first image becomes in the second the more deliberate one of the hunt. Miss Moore in the manner of a sports broadcaster then goes on to describe how the game was carried on by the team's seven star players and ends with the lines:

O flashing Orion,
your stars are muscled like the lion
(CP, p. 31)

There is a blending here of constellation and animal imagery and a pun on the word "stars." In bringing together imagery of the hunt and jungle animals and heavenly bodies to the service of a "report" on baseball, Miss Moore once again demonstrates an imagination that perceives congruence in the obviously disparate. A classic evidence of this particular trait of Miss Moore is the cat-mouse image which is in at least three of her poems. In "Style," in which the poet focuses her observations on the style of dancers and athletes, she underlines the tension in a tennis player's motions when she speaks of "Etchebaster's art, his catlike ease, his mousing pose" (MMR, p. 59). In "Silence," superior self-reliant people are compared to

the cat--
that takes its prey to privacy,
the mouse's limp tail hanging like shoelace from its mouth--
(CP, p. 95)

What seems to be a striking incongruity between this humble, somewhat homemade image and "the superior people" to which it is applied is erased by the realization that the image catches most aptly the real nature of the enjoyment of solitude by such people who "can be robbed of speech by speech which has delighted them."

The deepest feeling always shows itself in silence;
not in silence, but restraint.
(CP, p. 95)

The unconventional version of the cat and mouse image, in itself self-reliant, unsupported by other images or explanatory statements, "a proud irony" as Blackmur calls it,[3] forces into prominence a fresh approach toward solitude and intimacy.

Another important group of Miss Moore's metaphors involves the use of animals to image other animals. Here again is evidence of what T. S. Eliot calls "so alert an eye, so quick a process of association."[4] It is as if the poetic eye discerns semblances in insect and mammal, in land and marine creatures, thereby making unimportant elaborate biological classifications of species and upholding a kinship seen in the whole of animaldom. The plumet basilisk has "spider-clawed fingers" (CP, p. 29). There are "the cat's eyes of

the owl" (CP, p. 15) and "the pig-tailed monkey" (CP, p. 18), to speak of. An excited butterfly, pursued by curious eyes, settles on a flower "pawing like a horse. . . /apostrophe-tipped antennae porcupining out as it arranges nervous/wings" (WAY, p. 18). An animal may be pictured by the flashing of one animal image after another in rapid succession. Looking at the skunk, the eye, in a playful manner in keeping with the unmistakably playful tone, flits from chipmunk to goat, weasel, cuttlefish, aquatic mammal, back to skunk. The skunk is given a dramatic entrance royally dressed "in sylvan black and white chipmunk/regalia. . . /whited with glistening/goat-fur. . . In his/ ermined well-cuttlefish-inked wool." However, it seems that the observer, after having made the skunk "emerge daintily" thus, decides to make no attempt to deodorize the skunk, or to present it as plain "cute," or to rehabilitate it in men's eyes in a sentimental fashion. The lapse into mere cuteness or sentimentality is avoided since the observation does not lose sight of the skunkhood of the skunk and the series of animal metaphors for it ends with

> . . . That
> otter-skin on it, the living pole-cat,
> smothers anything that stings.
> (CP, p. 128)

For another example, this is said of the jerboa:

> . . . the fur on the back
> is buff-brown like the breast of the fawn-breasted
> bower bird. It hops like the fawn breast, but has
> chipmunk contours--perceived as
> it turns its bird head
> (CP, p. 21)

It is "fish-shaped" and "makes fern-seed footprints with kangaroo speed" (CP, p. 21). The obscurity of the jerboa, suggested by its epithet of "Sahara field mouse" (CP, p. 20), is dispelled partly by the more familiar epithet of "sand-brown jumping rat" and partly by the above series of similes and metaphors which makes of the jerboa a bird-chipmunk-fish-kangaroo composite; that is, a composite of animals less remote makes concrete the jerboaness of the jerboa. The poet's comment in the closing lines on the jerboa could also be said of the "leaps" made by the imagination in observing it:

> Its leaps should be set
> to the flageolet;
> (CP, p. 22)

For still another example, eel, mouse, shad, porcupine, alligator, and frog are utilized in defining Peter, a cat owned by two spinsters. Peter's apparent meekness and domesticity is suggested by the simile, "he may be dangled like an eel or set up on a forearm like a mouse," but he cannot "sit caged on the domestic rungs of the chair" for long (CP, p. 50). Such meekness is "a dishonesty." The natural Peter has "shadbones regularly set about the mouth, to droop or rise/in unison like the porcupine's quills" (CP, pp. 49-50). He has "alligator eyes"

(CP, p. 50) and is "an animal with claws" (CP, p. 51) and when he is honestly himself, he springs about "with froglike accuracy, emitting jerky cries" (CP, p. 50). Peter, with some potential of the deadliness of his large cat relatives in him, is upheld in the final stanza of the poem:

> an animal with claws wants to have to use
> them; that eel-like extension of trunk into tail is not an
> accident. To
> leap, to lengthen out, to divide the air--to purloin, to pursue.
> To tell the hen: fly over the fence, go in the wrong
> way in your perturba-
> tion--this is life; to do less would be nothing but
> dishonesty.
>
> (CP, p. 51)

As one considers the descriptive and metaphorical use of animals in whole poems, one may come across a rare instance of a poem in which the animal metaphor is used in a more or less traditional, even allegorical, sense in that there is an obvious and parallel connection between concept and percept. An example that easily comes to mind is "To Statecraft Embalmed." The "half limping and halfladyfied" Egyptian ibis, "transmigrating from the Sarcophagus" (CP, pp. 39-40) becomes the image of an over-cautious, impotent statesmanship which is content to be an "incarnation of dead grace."

> As if a death-mask ever could replace
> Life's faulty excellence!
>
> (CP, p. 40)

The tone is set by negative statements:

> Ibis, we find
> No
> Virtue in you--alive and yet so dumb.
> Discreet behaviour is not now the sum
> Of statesmanlike good sense.
> (CP, p. 40)

The parallel of ibis and sterile statecraft is further established by voice and address. The addressee in the title is "statecraft embalmed," but in the poem, the voice consistently addresses the ibis. The last lines bring in another parallel of image and idea. Dynamic statesmanship involves the insistent probing into itself and its identity--a suicidal tendency that finds an image in a bird relentlessly poking itself with its bill as if determined to "attack its own identity" (CP, p. 40).

"To a Statecraft Embalmed," however, is not characteristic of Miss Moore's poems in so far as metaphorical technique is concerned. Most of Miss Moore's animal poems do not submit just as easily to tidy explications. "An Octopus" illustrates the working out of metaphor in a method more complex than allegorical, although it starts with a parallel between an octopus and a glacier. In the opening lines, the octopus is clearly a metaphor for a glacier, "an octopus of ice." In the first few lines the octopus image of the glacier is evidently sustained:

> 'Picking periwinkles from the cracks'
> or killing prey with the concentric crushing rigour of the python,
> it hovers forward 'spider fashion
> on its arms' misleadingly like lace;
> its 'ghostly pallor changing
> to the green metallic tinge of an anemone-starred pool'.
> (CP, p. 78)

One is made to see the delicacy of the octopus-glacier, hovering forward on its arms like lace but this delicacy is honestly stated as "misleading" since it can destroy, "killing prey with the concentric rigour of the python." Already an ambiguity is suggested and the octopus image acquires a function other than merely descriptive of the glacier. In the confrontation between beauty and delicacy, richness, and "the dark energy of life," on the one hand, and menacing violence and destruction, on the other, in the glacier is carried on by other images. The fir trees have the "dark energy of life" compared to which "the rock seems frail" (CP, p. 78). The gusts of a storm, however, obliterate "the shadows of the fir trees" (CP, p. 79), and later the wind shears off twigs and loose bark from the trees.

> Is 'tree' the word for these things
> 'flat on the ground like vines'?
> some 'bent in a half circle with branches on one side
> suggesting dust-brushes, not trees;
> some finding strength in union, forming little stunted groves,
> their flattened mates of branches shrunk in trying to escape'
> from the hard mountain 'planed by ice and polished by the wind'--
> (CP, p. 84)

More confrontations of the kind are suggested in other passages:

> . . . the polite needles of the larches
> 'hung to filter, not to intercept the sunlight'--
> met by tightly wattled spruce-twigs
> (CP, p. 79)

> 'a mountain with those graceful lines which prove it a volcano',
> its top a complete cone like Fujiyama's
> till an explosion blew it off.
> (CP, p. 80)

> . . . the white flowers of the rhododendron surmounting rigid leaves
> upon which moisture works its alchemy
> transmuting verdure into onyx.
> (CP, p. 82)

The "vermilion and onyx and manganese-blue interior expensiveness" of the rocks, however, are in turn

> left at the mercy of the weather;
> 'stained transversely by iron where the water drips down',
> (CP, p. 79)

The octopus image with its delicacy and yet its awful violence returns in the last lines:

> the glassy octopus symmetrically pointed,
> its claw cut by the avalanche
> 'with a sound like the crack of a rifle,
> in a curtain of powdered snow launched like a waterfall'.
> (CP, p. 84)

Tension is provided by the consistent juxtaposition and opposition of the "energy of life" and the energy that annihilates. In Big Snow Mountain, there is really "no 'deliberate wide-eyed wistfulness'" (CP, p. 81). A catalogue of alerted animals that inhabit the mountain bears this out: "the exacting porcupine," "thoughtful beavers/making drains which seem the work of careful men with shovels," the goat "in stag-

at-bay position," "A special antelope/acclimated to grottoes from which issue penetrating draughts," "the nine-striped chipmunk/ running with unmammal-like agility along a log," "the water ouzel with 'its passion for rapids and high-pressured falls,'" the marmot involved in "a struggle between curiosity and caution,"

> the spotted ponies with glass eyes,
> brought up on frosty grass and flowers
> and rapid draughts of ice-water.
> Instructed none knows how, to climb the mountain.
> (CP, pp. 79-82)

It is no place for "businessmen who. . . /require for recreation/ three hundred and sixty-five holidays in the year," for a public out of sympathy with "doing hard things," for the Greeks who

> amused themselves with delicate behaviour
> because it was 'so noble and so fair';
> not practised in adapting their intelligence
> to eagle-traps and snow-shoes.
> (CP, pp. 82-84)

It is a place only for whatever "stands its ground" (CP, p. 80). The octopus-glacier, itself a picture of delicacy, destroys delicacy. This could be the central theme but the poem is also about style, precision, or to use a more general term, the aesthetics of a Marianne Moore poem. Hugh Kenner aptly describes Miss Moore's method of imbedding the aesthetics in this poem.

The poem continues to edge forward glacially picking and shifting periwinkles, pythons, spiders, lace, anemone. In fact by the time it has drawn toward its close (having incorporated inter alia, the Greek language, Henry James, and numerous citations from the National Parks Rules and Regulations) it appears to be discussing its own decorum as much as that of the glacier-octopus.[5]

The aesthetics become apparent in these lines from the poem:

> Neatness of finish! Neatness of finish!
> Relentless accuracy is the nature of this octopus
> with its capacity for fact.
> 'Creeping slowly as with meditated stealth,
> its arms seeming to approach from all directions.'
> (CP, p. 84)

Thus the "octopus of ice" exemplifies the qualities of the poem as well. It is "a self-sufficient system of energy"[6] with such "a capacity for fact" that it gathers to itself almost anything that comes near. The octopus is brought to the service of description of a glacier mountain and the kind of life lived in it. The observations give rise to a notion concerning the aesthetic treatment of details--"capacity for fact," "relentless accuracy," "neatness of finish." It is possible to find a unified structure in "An Octopus" but the poem possesses an ambiguity and richness beyond paraphrase.

Miss Moore, when delving into the aesthetics of her own art, may use examples from other arts. In some of the descriptive passages involving animal metaphors and associations, the total image includes, overtly or implicitly, references to painting or sculpture. An example

is this often-quoted passage from "The Steeple-Jack." The sea becomes "water etched with waves as formal as the scales on a fish" (CP, p. 13). The description, even in isolation, has great visual appeal. The word "etched" indicates that the speaker is visualizing the water in terms of its appeal to the eye of a painter. The mention of Durer in the first line seems to support this. The word "formal," suggesting a regularity and order of pattern as in fish scales, and other "arrangements" characteristic of a painting can also be applied to some details in the poem as seagulls "one by one, in two's, in three's. . . sailing around the lighthouse without moving their wings" or "fish-nets arranged to dry" or on the color aspect

> a sea the purple of the peacock's neck is
> paled to greenish azure as Durer changed
> the pine tree of the Tyrol to peacock blue and guinea
> grey.
>
> (CP, p. 13)

This sense of "formal" order projected in an almost still life portrait of the fishing town figures conspicuously in the theme of the poem: the apparent "formal" order and "arranged" life of the town; the real danger potential behind this surface order; the town's living through this danger by being orderly in its peril as symbolized by its steeple-jack who, in his precarious position on the steeple while fixing the star which is "disturbed" by the storm, methodically lets a rope down "as a spider spins a thread" (CP, p. 13).

In the examples involving references to sculpture, the method and effects are more than usually difficult to peg down which is of course not surprising with Miss Moore's poems. One has to go by individual examples. In "Virginia Britannia," a poem heavy with descriptive details about the Old Dominion, the stasis of the region which Miss Moore seems to consider stunted from a full flowering because of the first pilgrims' failure to see its possibilities, is partly conveyed by outright references to sculpture as restrictive, as in the description of the grounds as "all-green box-sculptured" (CP, p. 109), or to figuration implying movement frozen in stone. One of the bird images in the poem illustrates the point. The mocking bird, described as "mettlesome," driving "the owl from tree to tree" and imitating "the call/of whippoorwill or lark or katydid," is also "lead-/grey lead-legged. . . with head/held half away, and meditative eye as dead/ as sculptured marble." Standing "alone/on the stone-/topped table with lead cupids grouped to form the pedestal" (CP, p. 110), the live bird does take on a kind of marbleness of a statue. The implication of this ambiguous bird image seems to be that just as the live "mettlesome" mocking-bird becomes a lead-legged, marble-eyed one as it stands still on the pedestal, so the true life of Virginia becomes a static "marble" life in the hands of the first pilgrims who, with their "arrogance that can misunderstand importance" (CP, p. 113), were

unaware of the land's potential.

In "Snakes, Mongooses, Snake-Charmers and the Like" is another example of the live-animal-as-in-sculpture image. The pertinent lines run:

> Thick, not heavy, it stands up from its travelling-basket,
> the essentially Greek, the plastic animal all of a piece from
> nose to tail;
> one is compelled to look at it as at the shadow of the alps
> imprisoning in their folds like flies in amber, the rhythms
> of the skating rink.
> (CP, p. 65)

It is obvious that this is not a mere description of a snake standing up from the snake-charmer's basket and that here is a complex image--in fact, a cluster of images, one qualifying the other: the snake with its classic sculptured form, in the Greek sense; the shadows of the Alps imprisoning in their folds skaters with their rhythmic movements; and "flies in amber." One realizes once again the "leaps" that the imagination must have taken in order to bring such apparently disparate items together. What "one is compelled to look at" is not so much the snake but an impression conveyed by the total imagery. One sees brilliant glitter in the imagery: the glimmering moving lights as if made by skaters engulfed in the shadows of the Alps; the shine and sparkle of "flies in amber." There is grace and rhythm in the sinuous movement of both snake and skaters. The impression is thus one of graceful, rhythmic, radiant beauty. Yet "flies in amber" sug-

gests something dangerous and fatal in such beauty. The image of "the shadows of the Alps," enclosing rhythmically moving skaters, their skates flashing, also implies danger. The "thick, not heavy" body of the snake suggests a graceful yet vicious power to strike one dead. One is fascinated by the classic simplicity of the animal although, at the same time, one is aware of the paradox of tense suspended motion. Its apparent sculptural stasis ironically finds kinship with the gleaming sinuous movement, for it too has a potential deadliness. It may look like a sculpture with classic lines but it is after all a lethal animal.

The passage quoted above, among others already quoted in previous pages, also illustrates a prominent feature of Miss Moore's technique--a series of figuration to achieve an effect. In certain instances, the catalogue of animal images may just be part of an overall imagery which would posit a mood or an emotion or a contemplated truth about a phenomenon. In "A Grave," the composite of images with tactile, auditory, and visual appeal suggest the hectic rush and unflagging energy of movement of living creatures in and around the sea.

> men lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave,
> and row quickly away--the blades of the oars
> moving together like the feet of water spiders. . .
> . . . . . .

> the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-
> calls as heretofore--
> the tortoise-shell scourges about the feet of the cliffs, in
> motion beneath them;
>
> (CP, p. 56)

The imagery is paradoxical seen in the light of the observation that the sea is "a grave." However, this "grave" is active, not a mere inert receptacle of dead bodies like a hole in the ground. The sea is a "rapacious" collector, whose collection "the fish no longer investigate." In the image of the fish, one sees the calm and casual acceptance of life lived in "a grave." The sea supports life too but it is a life lived within the sphere of irrevocable death. The ambiguity of the sea is finally stated thus:

> and the ocean, under the pulsation of lighthouses and noise
> of bell-buoys,
> advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in
> which dropped things are bound to sink--
> in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition
> nor consciousness.
>
> (CP, pp. 56-57)

In "The Fish," another one of Miss Moore's poems on the sea, the placidity and weird silence of sea depths unexplored by man is projected by a series of marine images. The fish do not flit about but

> wade
> through black jade.
> Of the crow-blue mussel shells, one keeps
> adjusting the ash-heaps;
> opening and shutting itself like
>
> an
> injured fan.
>
> (CP, p. 37)

"Injured fan" implies injury brought about, not in violence, but with gentle, delicate motions which also make "injured fans" out of both plant and animal life in the sea. Thus

> the stars
>
> pink
> rice-grains, ink-
> bespattered jelly-fish, crabs like green
> lilies, and submarine
> toadstools, slide each on the other.
> (CP, p. 37)

The life of the sea thus becomes vegetable. The crabs, by their comparison to green lilies lose their sting and become part of this vegetable life, the motion of which is nothing more violent than "slide." For all its placidity and silence the sea destroys. The fish, which must "wade" under pressure of water, resembles "an injured fan" and

> The water drives a wedge
> of iron through the iron edge
> of the cliff.
> (CP, p. 37)

The fish "wades" through, nevertheless, from the dark depths where the shells are "crow-blue" to the shallower "turquoise sea of bodies." The cliff remains a "defiant edifice." The paradox of destruction and endurance is a theme thus drawn from this acute observation of marine life. The poem ends with a direct statement evolved out of this observation and ostensibly given as a comment on the durability of the cliff which is the "it" in the final lines.

> Repeated
> evidence has proved that it can live
> on what cannot revive
> its youth. The sea grows old in it.
> (CP, p. 38)

Miss Moore's catalogue of animal images could reach such proportions as to cover the whole or, at least, a major portion of the imagery of the poem. In some poems, the catalogue makes an impact in terms of broad surface coverage. The section of "The Jerboa" entitled "Too Much" contains a list of animals exploited or held in captivity: kept crocodiles, baboons put on the necks of giraffes to pick fruit; tied hippopotami; dogs, cats or eagles to course antelopes, dikdik, and ibex; appropriated impallas and onigers, ostrich, cranes, mongooses, storks, anoas, Nile geese; tame fish and small frogs to decorate the pink pools of the Pharaohs; geese and locusts used as a source of grease and oil, and ducks, rhinoceros, and buck, for ornament. It is obvious that the animals listed have no freedom at all. Even the serpent, considered sacred by the Egyptians and worshipped by them, is not free. The several references to the serpent included in the catalogue bears this out. The Egyptians "used serpent magic." This suggests the exploitation of the snake for which man has a natural fear for religious purposes. The serpent is next mentioned in the metaphor of the ostrich's neck "rearing back in the/dust like a serpent preparing to strike" (CP, p. 17), which removes the serpent from the realm of magic and myth and brings it to the common work-a-day world that

looks upon the serpent as nothing more than a deadly reptile. This in turn leads to references concerning the elimination of snakes by the turning of one animal upon the other, specifically, the mongoose, upon the snake, mention of which is made first, as one of the "little paired playthings" given to boys--ichneumon and snake--and then, more explicitly, in the account of the Pharaoh who feared snakes and tamed the mongoose to get rid of them. Thus, the serpent, though feared, becomes one more item in the catalogue of animals which are not free. This catalogue builds up to a quiet but nevertheless dramatic entrance of the jerboa. After fifteen stanzas of catalogue, the spring is released, and the jerboa comes onto the scene and dominates it from there on.

> a small desert rat,
> and not famous, that
> lives without water, has
> happiness. Abroad seeking food, or at home
> in its burrow, the Sahara field-mouse
> has a shining silver house
>
> of sand. O rest and
> joy, the boundless sand,
> the stupendous sand-spout,
> no water, no palm-trees, no ivory bed,
> tiny cactus; but one would not be he
> who has nothing but plenty.
> (CP, pp. 19-20)

A contrast is established on one level between the obvious enslavement of the catalogued animals and the freedom of the jerboa, but on a deeper level, a paradox is involved. The poem suggests that the

freedom of the Pharaohs who used these animals for luxuriant ends, which to Miss Moore is "too much," cannot be real freedom because it is built upon the captivity, exploitation, and fear of animals and men. There is established thus a contrast between the artificial and spurious freedom of the Pharaohs and the natural and genuine freedom of the jerboa. The jerboa's austere and simple life is paradoxically termed "abundance." It does not have the use of the Nile, but unlike the Pharaohs, it does not need the Nile because "it lives without water." Unlike the catalogued animals, it is master of the desert. It is authentically free because it has no need for "too much." It thrives upon the limitations of the desert and the basic necessities. The rather exhilarating description of the jerboa in the second section of the poem shows the jerboa as a creature very much alive and aware of itself and its surroundings, its leaps finding their own rhythm which "should be set to the flageolet" (CP, p. 22). It is "an autonomous envelope of energy."[7] Unlike the catalogued animals in the first section, the jerboa cannot be reduced to a mere term in the contrast.

As shown in the above discussion, the cataloguing of animals in "The Jerboa" achieves an effect by the incremental process and operates on an almost literal level with very sparse figuration. In "The Mind is an Enchanting Thing," such is not the case. The cataloguing technique consists of a seriate arrangement of similes and metaphors,

interspersed with personifications and direct statements, comparing the elusive human mind to such items not normally associated with it as: the glaze on a katydid-wing, Gieseking playing Scarlatti, the apteryx-awl or the kiwi "walking along with its eyes on the ground" (CP, p. 134), the gyroscope's fall, the dove-neck animated by the sun, fire in the dove-neck's iridescence. The imagery, most of which are insect and bird, makes visible the invisible--a mind in action which enchants the observer. The animation and illumination of the mind is aptly depicted by three images, all of which make reference to light from the sun. The mind is

> like the glaze on a
> katydid-wing
> subdivided by the sun
> till the nettings are legion.
> (CP, p. 133)

The mind animates and dissects what comes before it for observation. The spreading and deepening of perception of that which is observed is objectified by the two "dove-neck" images which suggest a deeper inward penetration by the sun. The mind is also "like the dove-neck animated by the sun" and "is fire in the dove-neck's iridescence" (CP, p. 134). The one other animal image reveals another aspect of the mind.

like the apteryx-awl
as a beak, or the
kiwi's rain-shawl
of haired feathers, the mind
feeling its way as though blind,
walks along with its eyes on the ground.
(CP, p. 134)

The kiwi, although it has wings, is a flightless bird and therefore has both feet on the ground. This images a favorite theme of Miss Moore: the mind does not fly away from earth, but rather observes what is there in it. The imagination thus starts with facts. Other non-animal figuration concretize more aspects of the mind: its interpretive powers "like Gieseking playing Scarlatti"; "its conscientious inconsistency" as certain and unmistakable as the gyroscope's fall; its use of past experience, for

It has memory's ear
that can hear without
having to hear.
(CP, p. 134)

It also is "memory's eye." The candidness and objectivity of the mind pares off an excess of emotionalism.

It tears off the veil; tears
the temptation, the
mist the heart wears,
from its eyes, -- if the heart
has a face; it takes apart
dejection.
(CP, p. 134)

The mind is, above all, aware of the non-conclusiveness of insight.

The unconfused mind does not rule out the possibility of confusion and therefore does not subscribe to an absolute fixity.

> Unconfusion submits
> its confusion to proof; it's
> not a Herod's oath that cannot change.
> (CP, p. 134)

"The Mind is an Enchanting Thing" is one more evidence of a poetic imagination that defies systematic classification and makes significant correspondences of what would ordinarily appear as the most unexpected combinations. In the examples of the descriptive and metaphoric uses of animal imagery in Miss Moore's poems, one sees disparities reconciled, the fusion of realms otherwise thought to be separate. The specific examples given are illustrations of Miss Moore's "variant. . . peculiarly her own."[8] They reveal perspectives that are fresh and individual, not standardized; perspectives in the making, not established in some kind of public domain. Later chapters will, it is hoped, illustrate more clearly how the poetic imagination avoids the stereotype, on the one hand, and total subjectivity, on the other, in that the reality it discerns and presents is a reality that

> comes to be present to the senses, present to the mind which possesses it through the senses, and present in the words of the poems which ratify this possession.[9]

## CHAPTER II

## MISS MOORE AND THE FABULIST TRADITION

In her foreword to A Marianne Moore Reader, Miss Moore tries to answer a question which she must have been asked often:

> Why an inordinate interest in animals and athletes? They are subjects of art and exemplars of it, are they not?
> (MMR, p. xvi)

As proven by examples in the first chapter, this notion of Miss Moore that animals are art's "subjects" and "exemplars" has been observed in her practice and may lead one to attempt to place her in any of the recognized traditions of the literary use of animal life such as the fable and the bestiary. The reader may inevitably associate her with the fabulist and the bestiarist, especially since one prevailing feature of her treatment of animals in her poems is "the abstract principle" which she seems to draw from the particulars of these "exemplars."

To illustrate, she describes the physical appearance and habits of the ostrich and relates the history of its exploitation and plunder by men in spite of which it endures--all of which leads to an affirmation of

> a meaning always missed
> by the externalist.

The power of the visible
is the invisible; as even where
no tree of freedom grows
so-called brute courage knows.
(CP, p. 104)

Her description of the various animals that had at one time or other fascinated a friend finally converges on the snake in the snake-charmer's basket and raises the question:

for what was it invented?
To show that when intelligence in its pure form
has embarked on a train of thought which is unproductive,
it will come back?
We do not know; the only positive thing about it is its
shape; but why protest?
The passion for setting people right is in itself an afflictive
disease
Distaste which takes no credit to itself is best.
(CP, p. 65)

The pangolin whose response to the challenge of labor and danger is described in great detail finds his counterpart in man who "not afraid of anything. . . /goes cowering forth, tread paced to meet an obstacle/at every step." The poem ends with man welcoming the new day:

The prey of fear, he, always
curtailed, extinguished, thwarted by the dusk,
work partly done,
says to the alternating blaze,
'Again the sun!
anew each day; and new and new and new,
that comes into and steadies my soul.'
(CP, p. 120)

Miss Moore's poems are strewn with proverbs or what seem to be proverbs: "Love is the only fortress strong enough to trust to" (CP, p. 123); "satisfaction is a lowly thing, how pure a thing is joy" (CP, p. 99); "Heroism is exhausting" (CP, p. 104); "The weak overcomes its menace, the strong overcomes itself" (CP, p. 128); "Don't be envied or armed with a measuring-rod" (CP, p. 144). One can go on drawing examples of the kind. Many of such "mottoes" are derived from a close observation of animals. A question that may therefore be profitably raised at this point is whether Miss Moore's method is the method of the bestiary or of the fable as in La Fontaine, whose fables Miss Moore translated.

Critical opinion is divided on the matter. On the one hand, Louise Bogan says, "Miss Moore's habit of drawing general conclusions (in the subtlest way) from sets of particulars reminds us of poets like La Fontaine, who used the fable as a framework."[1] Vivienne Koch, taking the same position, states her reasons as follows:

> Marianne Moore is in the tradition of the great fabulists, for her method is the method of discourse. The differential resides in her tone which is conversational, rather than as with older fabulists rhetorical. Thus, while in intention and framework she takes over the heritage of the fable, she feels quite free to ignore the stock trappings. One rigid convention of the fable is that animals are given human speech. Miss Moore's animals hardly ever speak, although she speaks to them. What remains in common with the fabulists is the descriptive element (but more closely executed than by the fabulists), the animal revealed in some characteristic action (but with Miss Moore narrated rather than dramatized), and the concluding sententia, which in her work is always a new and delicately

stated relationship in the realm of conduct rather than, as with La Fontaine and the tradition he utilized so wittily, a brisk climax of proverbial wisdom.[2]

Ralph Rees, on the other hand, maintains that

although Miss Moore approaches her discussion of man through her description of animals, she is never a fabulist nor an allegorist. Her allusions to men, when she makes them, are direct, and her animals are never symbols of man.[3]

He reiterates his point later in his dissertation: "Her animal poems are never fables; the animals have qualities that the poet admires, but these are not human qualities, nor are they compared with them."[4]

An examination of the poems, however, would show that one cannot possibly make clear-cut statements on the matter, just as Mr. Rees has done. The poems would demonstrate the influence of the bestiary and the fable in subject matter and structure in varying degrees--from almost pure fable and the fable-like, on the one hand, to those which would seem to draw a moral from the observation of the animal in a manner that does not necessarily adhere to the method of the bestiary and the fable, on the other. Then, too, some poems use the animal simply for the development of imagery or to define a psychological point or a witty notion.

The one poem of Miss Moore which follows closely the definition of a beast fable as "a prose or verse tale which usually points

a moral and in which animal characters are represented as acting with human feelings and motives"[5] is "Charity Overcoming Envy." This poem, which is in Miss Moore's latest collection, Tell Me, Tell Me, and which was published after her translation of La Fontaine's Fables, seems to be an exercise in the method of fable. The story, according to Miss Moore, is depicted in a late fifteenth century tapestry in the Burrell Collection, Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum. Since "an allegory may be addressed to the eye and is often embodied in painting, sculpture, or some form of mimetic art,"[6] Miss Moore, by giving the tapestry source of the story at the outset (it is in parentheses immediately below the title), seems to have declared her intention to be briefly but deliberately allegorical--as in fable. Charity and Envy are personified, Charity riding on an elephant and Envy, on a dog. The portion of the poem that is most illustrative of the above definition of the fable runs:

> Envy, on his dog,
> looks up at the elephant,
> cowering away from her, his cheek scarcely scratched.
> He is saying, "O Charity, pity me, Deity!
> O pitiless Destiny
> what will become of me,
> maimed by Charity--Caritas--sword unsheathed
> over me yet? Blood stains my cheek. I am hurt."
> The elephant, at no time borne down by self-pity,
> convinces the victim
> that Destiny is not devising a plot.
>
> (TMTM, pp. 18-19)

The "moral" is expressed not only by the title but also by the three aphoristic final lines:

> The problem is mastered--insupportably
> tiring when it was impending.
>
> Deliverance accounts for what sounds like an axiom.
>
> The Gordian knot need not be cut.
> (TMTM, p. 19)

The concluding maxims manifest two characteristics given of the Aesopic fables: "the outlook is realistic and ironical" and "in structure, the fable is always epigrammatic." [7]

It is also said of the Aesopic fables that "animals act according to their nature save that they have speech."[8] Miss Moore's "The Monkeys" could be used to exemplify this particular characteristic. The animals in this poem are typical of their kind: monkeys with their nervous winks and frenzied chatter and fear of snakes; elephants with "fog-coloured skin" and "practical appendages"; the parrakeet "destroying bark and portions of the food it could not eat"; the cat "with the wedge-shaped, slate-grey marks on its forelegs and the resolute tail" (CP, p. 44). However, as shown in the previous chapter, the animals are caricatures of Miss Moore's literary acquaintances twenty years back. They have speech to articulate a useful truth. They pass judgments on art. The poem ends with a direct quotation of the cat's speech, by means of which an astringent judgment is voiced, as well

as an expression of what art is not.

> 'They have imposed on us with their pale
> half-fledged protestations, trembling about
> in inarticulate frenzy, saying
> it is not for us to understand art; finding it
> all so difficult, examining the thing
>
> as if it were inconceivably arcanic, as symmet-
> rically frigid as if it had been carved out of chrysoprase
> or marble--strict with tension, malignant
> in its power over us and deeper
> than the sea when it proffers flattery in exchange for
> hemp,
> rye, flax, horses, platinum, timber, and fur.'
> (CP, p. 45)

In keeping with the structure of an Aesopic fable, the poem ends "with a significant utterance by one of the characters."[9] One sees, however, that the animals are not involved in the dramatization of a moral, as is usually the case with fable. Rather, the "moral" is evolved from description and narration of a recollection from the point of view of an "I."

This does not mean that Miss Moore's animals are never involved in dramatized action, fable-like. A majority of them perform in a kind of pantomime with the poet herself providing comment. Needless to say, these animals are without speech, thereby preserving their animal characters and enabling the reader to make a more deliberate attempt to draw inferences relative to himself or to the human situation. "The Paper Nautilus" may be used to elucidate the point. Just as a fable may begin with "a promythium" or "a prefatory statement of the fable's meaning and potential use"[10] the poem

begins with interrogatives implying the ironic contrast between human softness and weakness and the apparent fragility of the shell of the paper nautilus:

> For authorities whose hopes
> are shaped by mercenaries?
> Writers entrapped by
> teatime fame and by
> commuters' comforts? Not for these
> the paper nautilus
> constructs her thin glass shell.
> (CP, p. 122)

The succeeding stanzas dramatize the deprivation of the nautilus as it makes its shell and guards its eggs.

> Giving her perishable
> souvenir of hope, a dull
> white outside and smooth-
> edged inner surface
> glossy as the sea, the watchful
> maker of it guards it
> day and night; she scarcely

> eats until the eggs are hatched.
> Buried eight-fold in her eight
> arms, for she is in
> a sense a devil-
> fish, her glass ramshorn-cradled freight
> is hid but is not crushed.
> (CP, p. 122)

The next lines depict the paradox of the nautilus' being "hindered to succeed." The newly-hatched young struggle free from the shell of the watchful nautilus and incidentally sets the nautilus free too.

as Hercules, bitten

by a crab loyal to the hydra,
was hindered to succeed,
the intensively
watched eggs coming from
the shell free it when they are freed, --
leaving its wasp-nest flaws
of white on white, and close-

laid Ionic chiton-folds
like the lines in the mane of
a Parthenon horse,
(CP, pp. 122-123)

The conclusion derived from these "intensively watched" details is that "love is the only fortress strong enough to trust to." (CP, p. 123). But here the poem deviates from the method of fable. The "moral" is not just submitted as a lesson which the poem teaches; one is not supposed to lift it from context like a proverb. Rather, it is an individual truth bound with the details which gave rise to it.

the arms had
wound themselves as if they knew love
is the only fortress
strong enough to trust to.
(CP, p. 123)

Perhaps a more overt fable-like pantomime is exemplifed in "Bird-Witted." Dramatized action here involves not just one animal as in "The Paper Nautilus" but two sets of animals--the mother bird and her baby birds, one one hand, and the cat on the other. The essence of the technique is contrast, a fable-like aspect, since, in most fables, the moral evolves out of the parallel structure produced

by the use of contrasts. There is contrast between the "large" but "fledgling" birds "with innocent wide penguin eyes. . . /feebly solemn" and "their no longer larger mother" whose responsibility as provider for the baby birds has left her so worn out that her "delightful note. . . /before/the brood was here" has become "harsh" (CP, pp. 106-107). The contrast that is more akin to the fable, however, is the bird-cat contrast. The unsuspecting baby birds are set in opposition to the sly cat, their innocence to his deception, his sophistication to their naivete. As the cat "is slowly creeping toward the trim trio on the tree stem. . . /the three make room" but are instinctively "uneasy" (CP, p. 108). The final lines usher in the mother bird-cat contrast and the "moral." Instinct triumphs over superior intelligence as the mother bird

> nerved by what chills
> the blood, and by hope rewarded--
> of toil--since nothing fills
> squeaking unfed
> mouths, wages deadly combat,
> and half kills
> with bayonet beak and
> cruel wings, the
> intellectual cautious-
> ly creeping cat.
> (CP, p. 108)

The bird acts out of instinct, its "naturalness" a point of difference between it and the animal characters of the fable whose actions show the manipulating hand of the fabulist. Its behavior, nevertheless,

drives home a "moral," which is at the same time reenforced by the ironic application of the title taken from a line of Francis Bacon. Bird-wit does not become synonymous with outright stupidity but it does imply a narrow-mindedness that sees only the most elemental--preservation of oneself and one's own. Such narrowness of perspective, however, also means such an intensity that the victory of "the bird-witted" does not surprise.

On the whole, one can find contrasts and parallels, a dominant technique in fable, also prevalent in Miss Moore's poems. Speaking in general terms, there is the human-anteater parallel in "The Pangolin," already considered, though rather sketchily, in the first pages of this chapter; or the human-race horse parallel in a "discussion" of champions in "Tom Fool at Jamaica." The human-ostrich contrast and then the giant-birds-ostrich contrast in "He Digesteth Harde Yron," "dramatize a meaning always missed by the externalist"--that "the power of the visible is the invisible" (CP, p. 104). The contrast between dubious and genuine freedom is depicted in terms of the Pharaoh-jerboa opposition already discussed in the previous chapter.

Some of Miss Moore's animal poems, therefore, while they may not be thought of as strictly fable in the traditional sense, have incorporated certain elements of the fable. Moreover, they draw

material from legends which also provided material for the popular medieval bestiaries. This is obvious in a poem like "Sea Unicorns and Land Unicorns," the notes to which show evidence of quotations from Herodotus and Pliny's Natural History, the source of so much bestiary material. The subject matter itself of sea unicorns and land unicorns

> with their respective lions--
> . . . . . .
> since where the one is,
> its arch enemy cannot be missing.
> (CP, p. 85)

was popular among medieval bestiarists. The epithet given the unicorn in the second line of the poem, "mighty monoceros with immeasured tayles" is quoted from Spenser and may have been derived from the bestiarists' confusion of terms: "we notice that the rhinoceros is the same as the monoceros, and is in Latin understood to be the unicorn."[11] The notion that the unicorn can throw itself "head foremost from a cliff" and "walk away unharmed" (CP, p. 87) is taken, according to Miss Moore's own admission, from Bulfinch's Mythology which speaks of hearsay which prevailed among hunters "that all the animal's strength lay in its horn and that when hard pressed, it would throw itself from the pinnacle of the highest rock horn foremost, so as to pitch upon it, and then march off not a whit the worse for its fall."[12] That the unicorn is

'impossible to take alive'
tamed only by a lady inoffensive like itself
. . . . . .
'upon her lap,'
its 'mild wild head doth lie'
(CP, p. 87)

has Pliny, admittedly, for a source, and was a common notion held by bestiarists. The idea, for instance, is spoken of in the Physiologus thus: "they send it to a pure virgin all robed. And the Unicorn springs into the lap of the maiden and she subdues him and he follows her."[13]

"Sea Unicorns and Land Unicorns" also mentions the salamander "unconsumed" by fire (CP, p. 86). Another poem, "His Shield," makes a more extensive allusion to this quality of the salamander:

I'll wrap
myself in salamander-skin like Presbyter John.
A lizard in the midst of flames, a firebrand
that is life, asbestos-eyed asbestos-eared, with tattoed nap
and permanent pig on
the instep; he can withstand

fire and won't drown.
(CP, p. 143)

The poem ends with the counsel:

Become dinosaur-
skulled, quilled or salamander-wooled.
(CP, p. 144)

A note in The Book of Beasts, a translation from a twelfth century Latin bestiary, attributes to Aristotle the notion that the salamander "not only walks through fire, but puts it out in doing so," and to

Pliny, the following:

When asbestos was discovered, it was assumed to be the wool of this creature. Prester John had a robe made from it.[14]

In "The Plumet Basilisk," Miss Moore alludes to the legend of this reptile in the lines:

> This octave of faulty
> decorum hides the extraordinary lizard
> till nightfall, which is for man the basilisk whose look will
> kill; but is
> for lizards men can
> kill.
>
> (CP, p. 28)

Again, the legend was a popular one among the "natural historians," evidence of which is this quotation from Pliny:

To come now unto the Basilisk, whom all other serpents do flee and are afraid of: albeit he killeth them with his very breath and smel that passeth from him; yea, and (by report) if he do but set his eie on a man, it is enough to take away his life.[15]

Miss Moore's epithets of "serpent-dove" and "gold-defending dragon" for the plumet basilisk bring to mind more legendary material. "Dracontine cockatrices, perfect and poisonous from the beginning" (CP, p. 67), Miss Moore's term for novices among authors, allude to fabulous animals which, in fourteenth century legendry, became alternate names for basilisks.[16]

Miss Moore's references to the diet of some of the animals in her poetic menagerie may also show traces of ancient or medieval lore. That the chameleon "could snap the spectrum up for food"

(MMR, p. 65) echoes a fanciful idea as old as Pliny--that the chameleon feeds on air.[17] That the ostrich "digesteth harde yron" seems to have come to Miss Moore via Lyly's Euphues from such a statement as this in the Physiologus:

> It is also related of him that he swallows even glowing iron and fiery coals, and all these do good to his stomach, for his nature is very cold.[18]

This brings to mind the hearsay about the pangolin's source of nourishment:

> this ant- and stone-swallowing uninjurable
> artichoke which simpletons thought a living fable
> whom the stones had nourished, whereas ants had done so.
>
> (CP, p. 120)

The title, "Nothing Can Cure a Sick Lion but to Eat an Ape," which Miss Moore claims is a line from Carlyle, finds a corresponding statement in The Book of Beasts, among other bestiaries: "a sick lion searches for a monkey to eat, by means of which he can be cured."[19]

The Book of Beasts says this about elephants:

> There is a mild gentleness about them, for, if they happen to come across a forewandered man in the deserts, they offer to lead him back into familiar paths. If they are gathered together into crowded herds, they make way for themselves with tender and placid trunks, lest any of their tusks should happen to kill some animal on the road. If by chance they do become involved in battles, they take no little care of the casualties, for they collect the wounded and exhausted into the middle of the herd.[20]

This easily reminds one of Miss Moore's "equanimity's contived by the elephant" (CP, p. 130). The elephant, according to the same source, is afraid of mice. Miss Moore seems to have touched on the same ironic strain when she used "mouse grey" to describe the color of the elephant.

Among the religious illustrations that accompanied the bestiary legends, Miss Moore seems to have used only one. From the notion that the lioness gives birth to dead cubs which remain lifeless until the third day when the father breathes life into their faces, The Book of Beasts draws the following illustration:

> Just so did the Father Omnipotent raise Our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead on the third day. Quoth Jacob: "He shall sleep like a lion, and the lion's whelp shall be raised." [21]

In "In Distrust of Merits" in which Miss Moore deplores hate and war, she makes the following exhortation:

> O black imperial lion
> of the Lord--emblem
> of a risen world--be joined at last, be
> joined.
>
> (CP, p. 135)

It can be said, on the whole, that Miss Moore's borrowings from the bestiary were confined to the legends, to subject matter rather than technique, although there may be isolated cases of technical influence as in her outright use of symbolic representation such that a group of lines separated from context, could still point out a

moral by the significance of representation alone. A clear example would be these lines from "The Plumet Basilisk."

> In
> Copenhagen the principal door
> of the bourse is roofed by two pairs of dragons standing on
> their heads--twirled by the architect--so that the four
> green tails conspiring upright, symbolize four-fold security.
> (CP, p. 27)

There is indeed ample evidence to show that Miss Moore utilized elements basic to fable and bestiary, but as Vivienne Koch puts it, the poet felt "quite free to ignore the stock trappings."[22] On the other hand, there are also many other poems in which the details given about the animals are accurately scientific, rather than pseudo-scientific, such as those on the pelican, swan, buffalo, fish, cat, octopus, snail, reindoor, wood-weasel, porcupine, jellyfish, arctic ox, and butterfly. In a way, Miss Moore is like the natural historian that Pliny was, combining fact and fancy in her presentation of animal nature. Like Pliny, she has not actually seen many of the exotic animals she writes about and her knowledge about them comes largely from what she has read. Pliny, however, could not sift fact from fancy whereas Miss Moore demonstrated that she could and did so, as, for instance, when she speaks of "the basilisk whose look will kill; but is for lizards men can kill" (CP, p. 28) or the pangolin "which simpletons thought. . . / the stones had nourished, whereas ants had done/so" (CP, p. 120).

Her use of pseudo-science is therefore deliberate and is perhaps done in the same spirit as that which one sees in other writers who use myth to substantiate a reality that is over and above the reality of bare fact.

Only one more point of kinship between Miss Moore's animal poems and the fable remains to be pointed out--humor. There is humor in Miss Moore's poems which stabilizes the inherent seriousness of her observations, although it may be a humor less obvious and more benign, because of a more optimistic outlook, than that in a La Fontaine fable. The humor in the fable is always attached to a didactic purpose while in Miss Moore's verse this need not be so. She does have didactic humor in some of her poems most approaching fable like "The Monkeys" or "Bird-Witted," but her humor is not limited to just this one type. The humor in some of her lines may be enjoyed for humor's sake. For easy examples, the tuatera "takes to flight/ if you do not" (CP, p. 29); the wood-weasel

> emerges daintily, the skunk--
> don't laugh--in sylvan black and white chipmunk
> regalia.
>
> (CP, p. 128)

There is humor in the very suggestion of the pangolin as a walking artichoke.

The humor may be an offshoot of the juxtaposition of disparates in which case the wish-fulfillment in "O to be a Dragon" becomes es-

sentially humorous.

> If I, like Solomon, . . .
> could have my wish--
>
> my wish. . . O to be a dragon,
> a symbol of the power of Heaven--of silkworm
> size or immense, at times invisible.
> Felicitous phenomenon!
> (MMR, p. 65)

Humor arises from the disparities--between Solomon and the ordinary person that is the speaker, between both and the dragon, between the speaker conscious of his smallness (he is "silkworm size") and his immense heaven-high hopes.

On a deeper level, thus, the poet takes the disparities and absurdity of both the animal and the human situation with a sense of humor. Humor, like the thick hides, scales, thorns, or a blending coloration of Miss Moore's animals of armor, protects the self against a universe that may not be too friendly. It is in this sense that humor can be seen as "a step saver," a housewifely metaphor that Miss Moore uses. In the face of man's frailty and the constant threat of annihilation, humor is a saving grace that enables man to "save a few steps" and incidentally years. The terms are taken from two often quoted lines from "The Pangolin."

> Among animals, one has a sense of humour.
> Humour saves a few steps, it saves years.
> (CP, p. 121)

That the spiny porcupine is "an apparition of splendour" is comic, but the deeper humor lies in the fact that in order to win, it makes a sort of calculated retreat; it "advances backward."

The few examples given above of Miss Moore's humor do not, of course, exhaust the uses of humor in her verse, but they may be enough to prove that, like one of her peculiarly funny birds, the frigate pelican, that "hell-diver, frigate-bird, hurricane-bird," which

> appears to prefer
>
> to take, on the wing, from industrious crude-winged species
> the fish they have caught, and is seldom successless.
> (CP, p. 31)

the poet, with humor as armor, is

> able to foil the tired
> moment of danger that lays on heart and lungs the
> weight of the python that crushes to powder.
> (CP, p. 32)

It is clear that in the definition of a beast fable as "a short humorous allegorical tale, in which animals act in such a way as to illustrate a simple moral truth or inculcate a wise maxim,"[23] the one aspect that does not apply to Miss Moore's animal poems, generally speaking, is not so much the humorous, but the allegorical. Except for isolated examples already cited, the animals are never plain allegorical symbols like those in the bestiaries and fables. The main point of fable is not the lion-ness or crow-ness of the animal

characters but their being embodiments of human characteristics. For La Fontaine, description of the animal's appearance and habits is immaterial for what is important is its function in the story. In his dedicatory lines to the Dauphin, he says:

> Animals enact my universal theme,
> Educating man, fantasist though I seem.
> (Fables, MM trs., p. 11)

On the other hand, Miss Moore's presentation of the particulars of the animal results in that animal's being clearly itself. Essentially, one sees thus the elephantness of the elephant or the catness of the cat. Miss Moore may have rejected the pathetic fallacy when she said, "The bird has wings and should be finding its own food, not encouraged to think that he is a person" (TMTM, p. 6). The animal is an animal, accepted for itself, and whatever human references are drawn from its qualities, are usually drawn without the poet's contriving to make such a transference.

La Fontaine deliberately depended on stock characters, taking advantage of the fact that the meek sheep, the innocent lamb, the greedy wolf, and the clever fox, already known to the reader as such, would bring the point home unmistakably, yet economically. In the preface to his Fables, he declares:

> We should teach them (the children) what a lion is, a fox, and so on, and why a person is sometimes compared to a fox or a lion. Fables undertake to do this, providing first impression of things.
> (Fables, p. 8)

Marianne Moore, wishing to avoid stock reactions, on the contrary, often chooses to deal with exotic animals. When she does take a domestic one like a cat or a horse, her approach toward its animal nature and habits is oblique and the resulting utterance is a set of particular, highly qualified statements.

The moral that may eventually be articulated at the end of a Marianne Moore poem is an outgrowth of an intense observation on the physical reality of the animal. It is as if the catalogue of details is there for the poet to examine and find a clue as to the final value of such details. The climax is thus interiorized, not insisted upon as in fable. The direct statement is arrived at by a process of indirection with the poet working her way around the subject matter.

Marie Boroff calls the structure of Marianne Moore's poems "dramatic." In Miss Boroff's own terms, dramatic structure is one that reveals a power of synthesis, one in which statements are parts of a mental action taking place through time, the poet simulating the continuity of utterance just as the novelist or dramatist simulates the continuity of events. The mental eye is trained on the animated exemplar rather than on the abstract principle and the moral content, presenting itself in terms of particular beings and actions, is so latent in the descriptive material that it seems to gain in emotional charge until the speaker can no longer refrain from giving it explicit expres-

sion.[24] This same critic in another essay explains dramatic structure as follows:

> The poem is not a little essay or homily; it presents to the reader not the product of reflection--the statement in which it has resulted--but the experience of reflection. This experience is colored, as experience inevitably is, by the play of mood and emotion, and essentially conditioned by the character of the being to whom it occurs. The meditation is far from emotionally static; there is a crescendo of intensity as the full significance of the concept emerges.[25]

It is perhaps easier to see this "crescendo of intensity" in one of Miss Moore's rare lyrical "I" poems, "Melancthon," in which the "I" is the elephant. In this poem, a series of observations on the physical toughness and poise of the elephant are given in the first lines. There is, for instance, the "naturalness" of its relationship with its environment and the elements:

> Openly, yes
> with the naturalness
> of the hippopotamus or the alligator
> when it climbs out on the bank to experience the
>
> sun, I do these
> things which I do, which please
> no one but myself. Now I breathe and now I am submerged; the blemishes stand up and shout when the object
> in view was a
> renaissance; shall I say
> the contrary? The sediment of the river which
> encrusts my joints, makes me very grey but I am used
>
> to it, it may
> remain there; do away
> with it and I am myself done away with, for the
> patina of circumstance can but enrich what was

there to begin
with

(CP, pp. 45-46)

The lines that follow exalt its hard skin:

This elephant-skin
which I inhabit, fibred over like the shell of
the cocoanut, this piece of black glass through which no light

can filter--cut
into checkers by rut
upon rut of unpreventable experience--
it is a manual for the peanut-tongued and the

hairy-toed.

(CP, p. 46)

The speaker's awareness of his possession of physical hardiness spurs talk of power ("my back/is full of the history of power"); of inner toughness ("my soul shall never/be cut into/by a wooden spear"); of its trunk ("the unity of/life and death has been expressed by the circumference/ described by my trunk"); of poise ("external poise. . . /well nurtured. . . /in pride"). That the "mental action" does not consist of a smooth logical progression of thought is indicated by the questions and hints of doubt which come after certain assertions:

my back
is full of the history of power. Of power? What
is powerful and what is not?

(CP, p. 46)

external poise, it

has its centre
well nurtured--we know
where--in pride; but spiritual poise, it has its centre where?
(CP, pp. 46-47)

The I of each is to

the I of each
a kind of fretful speech
which sets a limit on itself; the elephant is
black earth preceded by a tendril?
(CP, p. 47)

From here on, the poem quits "the fretful speech" of "I" and changes to the third person observer. The observations and questionings come back to the elephant's tough hide--"the indestructibility of matter"--which connotes inevitably an indestructibility of spirit. A "crescendo" of lyric intensity is reached by the concluding rhetoric as well.

the elephant is
that on which darts cannot strike decisively the first

time, a substance
needful as an instance
of the indestructibility of matter; it
has looked at electricity and at the earth-

quake and is still
here; the name means thick. Will
depth be depth, thick skin be thick, to one who can see no
beautiful element of unreason under it?
(CP, pp. 47-48)

Most of Miss Moore's poems are not clearly in the lyrical tradition like "Melancthon." The one quality that stands out in them is the

wealth of descriptive detail on one animal or type of animal and it is in these essentially descriptive poems that structure effectively reveals "a power of synthesis," although it may not be so easy to ascertain how such could come about, and eventually, one ends up going by individual poems on the matter. A list of such poems would include: "The Jerboa," "The Plumet Basilisk," "The Frigate Pelican," "The Buffalo," "Peter," "An Octopus," "Sea Unicorns and Land Unicorns," "Rigorists," "The Pangolin," "The Paper Nautilus," "Elephants," "His Shield," "Armour's Undermining Modesty," "Tom Fool at Jamaica," "The Arctic Ox (or Goat)," "Half Deity," and "Blue Bug."

Miss Moore's "Apparition of Splendour" may not be as heavily detailed as the aforementioned poems, that is, in terms of volume, but it serves quite aptly to illustrate the structuring of highly selective detail. Besides, it is possible to compare it structurally with a La Fontaine fable which Miss Moore herself referred to in her notes to this particular poem. The fable, "The Hedgehog, the Fox, and the Flies," tells of a bleeding fox, who, having escaped the hounds that pursued him, sank down to rest only to be feasted upon by a swarm of flies. The second half of the verse, as translated by Miss Moore, runs:

> Now here, someone new to my verse--
> All over spines, with the forest for nurse--
> Burned to rescue his friend from the relentless brood
> Who stayed though surfeited with blood,
> And said, "I shall impale each pest upon a spine
> Good Cousin Fox, and you shall be yourself again."

Reynard replied, "No, friend, please do not stir a quill:
Best let the dastards feed till they have had their fill.
If you impale these pests, now full as they can swell,
Thin fiends will take their place and be more unbearable."

Profiteers swarm the world; no one could count them all--
If you are at court or if you are making a will.
Aristotle applied this fable to mankind;
Examples could be enumerated--
Reflecting pointedly, o ur own French mind.
Such persons plague us least when they are sated.
(Fables, p. 296)

La Fontaine's narrative, of course, is typically fable. The moral, the dominating feature of an obviously preconceived plan, comes at the end of a chronological development of events and is clearly a "product" rather than an "experience" of reflection. The point is the paradox of peaceful resistance. The sly fox, surprising the reader with his refusal of the hedgehog's help, sees that he could win by yielding. The fable becomes one more detail, intended to be considered in an analysis of "Apparition of Splendour," since one line in this poem, "with the forest for nurse," is borrowed by Miss Moore from her own version of the La Fontaine fable, a fact which she admits in her footnotes.

Miss Moore's poem runs:

Partaking of the miraculous
since never known literally,
Durer's rhinoceros
might have startled us equally
if black-and-white-spined elaborately.

Like another porcupine, or fern,
    the mouth in an arching egret
was too black to discern
    till exposed as a silhouette;
    but the double-embattled thistle of jet--

disadvantageous supposedly--
    has never shot a quill. Was it
some joyous fantasy
    plain eider-eared exhibit
    of spines rooted in the sooty moss,

or "train supported by porcupines--
    a fairy's eleven yards long"?. . .
as when the lightning shines
    on thistlefine spears, among
    prongs in lanes above lanes of a shorter prong,

"with the forest for nurse," also dark
    at the base--where needle debris
springs and shows no footmark;
    the setting for a symmetry
    you must not touch unless you are a fairy.

Maine should be pleased that its animal
    is not a waverer, and rather
than fight, lets the primed quill fall.
    Shallow oppressor, intruder
    insister, you have found a resister.
(MMR, pp. 51-52)

This poem opens with a visual shock effected by the immediate and startlingly straight presentation of Durer's rhinoceros. This animal depicted by Durer in a woodcut dated 1515 was based on a sketch of the Indian rhinoceros sent by a friend. Instead of making a realistic reproduction, "Durer stylized the creature, bizarre in itself, into a combination of scales, laminae and shells suggesting a fantastically shaped and patterned suit of armour."[26] In Durer's rhinoceros, one

sees an animal whose natural hideousness has been heightened by the artist so that it becomes physically fantastic, a visual hallucination, and therefore, "an apparition of splendour."

In the second stanza, Miss Moore, rather nonchalantly, introduces another visual shock, the porcupine, "a double-embattled thistle of jet" with "the mouth in an arching egret. . . /too black to discern." The mention made of its never having shot a quill brings in a shock other than that caused by a physical "apparition," a kind of psychological shock. The reference made is to the defensive tactics of the animal. The Animal Kingdom describes the animal's tactics as follows:

> In spite of what we have often heard, the porcupine cannot shoot its quills into the flesh of an enemy. . . . Normally the great mass of spines lies smoothly back as the animal ambles slowly along. Overtaken by a dangerous foe, it assumes an "on-guard" position. Its back arched and every spine bristling, the porcupine whirls about rapidly so that it is always presenting its rear to the foe.
>
> If the enemy is persistent, the porcupine backs up to him. Then it will suddenly lash out with its short, well-armed club-tail and drive a dozen or more quills deep into the flesh of the intruder. It strikes with lightning speed, perfect timing, and great accuracy, generally aiming for the face.[27]

This fantastic situation of an animal with an excellent weapon which would rather avoid an enemy than fight is exemplified also by the rhinoceros. The Animal Kingdom verifies the "iron-plated" appearance of the "armoured" rhinoceros and its tendency to fly from danger.

When suddenly confronted with danger, it is apt to charge without provocation. Given time to digest the situation, it will usually seek safety in flight.[28]

In an earlier poem, "His Shield," Miss Moore had already brought the porcupine and the rhinoceros together in a catalogue of animals of armor, animals that are "battle-dressed." This poem implies that there is an armor more effective than physical armor

> a formula safer than
>
> an armourer's: the power of relinquishing
> what one would keep; that is freedom.
> (CP, p. 143)

In short, this poem, as well as "The Apparition of Splendour," advocates retreat as the best means of insuring victory, a psychologically startling proposition. As the observer sees it work out in the particular example of the porcupine, she begins to think in terms of some "joyous fantasy." At first, such a fantasy is still attached to the physical reality of the animal, a "plain eider-eared exhibit/of spines rooted in the sooty moss." The porcupine, and for that matter, the rhinoceros, with soft ears but a hard armored body, a "battle-dressed" monstrosity physically, but a "weakling" psychologically, is indeed a fantasy. Fantasy in the next lines begets connotations of magic and sorcery. The quotation "train supported by porcupines--/a fairy's eleven yards long" is, upon Miss Moore's own admission, taken from Goldsmith. Rebecca Price Parkin maintains that it is from a didactic

fairy tale which tells of a prince so infatuated with a white mouse with green eyes that he had to leave his bride on their wedding night and go on a long journey to look for it, and of the bride who, instead of defending her position outright, accompanies her mouse-happy husband in the form of a blue cat and helps him find the mouse which was actually an ugly sorceress whose "train was supported by porcupines," only to eat it up once it was found and break the spell it had on the prince.[29] The fairy tale, which is of course a fantasy, serves to continue the thematic utterance--the effectivity of withdrawal as a means of defending oneself.

The next lines present an image that carries over the notion of fantasy attached to the physical reality, this time, of a plant: the pine trees, in a way looking like the porcupine. The lines "with the forest for nurse" borrowed by Miss Moore from her own translation of La Fontaine's "The Hedgehog, the Fox, and the Flies" amplifies the pine tree-porcupine link, since in the fable, the term is part of a line descriptive of the physique of the hedgehog--"all over spines, with the forest for nurse." The implication is that the link is not only in terms of the visual but also of the thematic. The pines' "needle debris/springs and shows no footmark"; under pressure, the needles yield and then spring back into position. The pine-tree image exemplifies once again the paradox of winning by yielding. In another Marianne Moore poem,

"What are Years," the paradox suggested by the sea image is expressed thus:

> in its surrendering
> finds its continuing.
> (CP, p. 99)

Once again, this fantasy in the pine forest suggests the magical in the declaration of the speaking voice that the pine forest is "the setting of a symmetry/you must not touch unless you are a fairy." In this charmed symmetry, one discerns that surrender which is "a continuing," a principle also demonstrated in the particular beings and actions of the rhinoceros and the porcupine, and acceptable only to one with the magical powers of a fairy.

The final stanza mentions the "pine tree state," which also has the porcupine as "its animal," and states in explicit terms, the paradox of "the unwaverer" and "the resister" that does not fight and "lets the primed quill fall." To the end, "the abstract principle" is thought of in terms of "the animated exemplar," and not vice-versa, as in fable.

It can be deduced from the foregoing discussion of "Apparition of Splendor" that the poem is one far removed from fable, both in subject matter, considering that the details about the porcupine do not come from bestiary or fable legendry, and in structure. This can be said of a number of animal poems already mentioned in lists

previously given.

It remains to be pointed out that the poems of Miss Moore which could be considered farthest removed from the method of fable are the very few that do not carry a moral or an "abstract principle" at all. Two examples immediately come to mind. "To a Chameleon," the full text of which will be given in the next chapter, is purely descriptive and shows delight in the observation of the animal as such. The other example is "A Jellyfish," one of Miss Moore's shortest animal poems, which runs:

> Visible, invisible
> a fluctuating charm
> an amber-tinctured amethyst
> inhabits it, your arm
> approaches and it opens
> and it closes; you had meant
> to catch it and it quivers;
> you abandon your intent.
> (MMR, p. 66)

The reader may see the description of the movement of the jellyfish as connoting the movement of flux or some such notion, but he does so unaided by the poet. The description gives rise, not to a moral, but to an articulation of an observation on human psychology. This poem and "To a Chameleon" are rarities in Miss Moore, but they are brought to one's attention, nevertheless, to show that, on the question of whether or not her animal poems are fables or bestiaries,

one can accurately conclude that such poems cover a range from a close approximation of fables to that which present sensory details without a "moral" aim. In these poems one sees a poetic imagination that is receptive enough to appropriate the materials and stylistic devices of fable, bestiary, natural history, and science whenever they suit its purpose, but liberated enough "to ignore the stock trappings."

# CHAPTER III

## "Imaginary gardens with real toads in them"

The discussion of the particulars in Miss Moore's animal poetry in the preceding chapters leads one to a consideration of Miss Moore's practice in general, especially with regard to her poetic menagerie. The examination made in these chapters of the descriptive and metaphoric uses of animal life (Chapter I) as well as to the extent to which her animal poems draw material and technique from fable and bestiary (Chapter II) brings to the fore one predominant feature of most, though not all, of such poems; that is, the impressive volume of minute, precise scientific details about the animal's habits and physique in them. This could have prompted a Newsweek article to state that "most of Miss Moore's poems are definitions, encyclopedia articles set to music,"[1] a very sweeping statement which does not take into consideration the several aspects of Miss Moore's aesthetics, both in theory and in practice, which this chapter hopes to examine. Also, this wealth of physical details has led to divided critical reaction.

On the one hand there is the opinion that such poetry which Kathleen Raine calls "the poetry of pure perception" is extremely limited.

This critic holds that "perceptual images, however intense or refined, lack a dimension without which we soon begin to feel an intolerable claustrophobia" and that "the poetry of pure perception, carried to the extreme, results in flat materialism."[2] Jacques Maritain, who agrees with Miss Raine, adds:

> In a more general way, a certain self consciousness or modesty may prevent a poet from daring enough. I wonder if some excellent poets like Miss Marianne Moore, do not restrict themselves to an almost purely visual or perceptual poetry for fear of avowing the subjectivity of their poetic experience, from which they fly at the very moment when they receive from it the fortunate spark of creative incitement and perception.[3]

Miss Moore's predilection for precision such that she borrows material from scientific tracts and journals, news magazines, encyclopedias, and the like has even raised doubts on her originality. Austin Clarke suggests that Miss Moore is a mere "collector," one of several "American writers still in the acquisitive phase, for they tell us what they are reading quite freely in their lines, collect foreign objects in notebooks and albums, stick pins through asphyxiated butterflies, but rarely chase over the hillocks with their own butterfly nets."[4]

Many other critics, on the other hand, although admitting that she writes "with the passionless accuracy of a treatise or a text-book" are not as quick to dismiss her as a limited poet. Her "style combines the frigid objectivity of the laboratory with the zeal of naive discovery."[5] Her "nature description is exact but she is never mere reporter, mere

naturalist."[6] She is "the botanist's and zoologist's poet as well as the poet's poet."[7] T. S. Eliot in his introduction to Marianne Moore's Selected Poems gives the most lucid expression of this positive view:

> The first aspect in which Miss Moore's poetry is likely to strike the reader is that of minute detail rather than that of emotional unity. The gift for detailed observation, for finding the exact words for the experience of the eye, is liable to disperse the attention of the relaxed reader. The minutiae may even irritate the unwary, or arouse in them only the pleasurable excitement evoked by the carved ivory ball with eleven other balls inside it, the full-rigged ship in a bottle, the skeleton of the crucifix-fish. The bewilderment consequent upon trying to follow so alert an eye, so quick a process of association, may produce the effect of some "metaphysical" poetry. To the moderately intellectual the poems may appear to be intellectual exercises; only to those whose intellection moves more easily will they immediately appear to have emotional value. But the detail has always its service to perform. The similes are there for use; as the mussel shell "opening and shutting itself like an injured fan" (where injured has an ambiguity good enough for Mr. Empson), the waves "as formal as the scales on a fish." They make us see the object more clearly, though we may not understand immediately why our attention has been called to this object, and though we may not immediately grasp its association with a number of other objects. So in her amused and affectionate attention to animals--from the domestic cat, or "to popularize the mule," to the most exotic strangers from the tropics, she succeeds at once in startling us into an unusual awareness of visual patterns with something like the fascination of a high-powered microscope.[8]

The poet herself has spoken on the matter. "When writing with maximum impact, the writer seems under compulsion to set down an unbearable accuracy." (Predilections, p. 4) Such poetry that "proffers flattery in exchange for hemp, rye, flax, horses, platinum, timber, and fur" is only for the "monkeys" (CP, p. 45).

Miss Moore openly declares her admiration for the work of

scientists:

> I like the writing of precise scientific thinkers. Lots of these scientists don't stand forth as litterateurs, but I find their devotion to fact very stimulating. They are much more competent than I am particularly where precision is concerned.[9]

She finds the scientist's method of work analogous, rather than opposed, to her own.

> Do the poet and the scientist not work analogously? Both are willing to waste effort. To be hard on himself is one of the main strengths of each. Each is attentive to clues, each must narrow the choice, must strive for precision. . . . The objective is fertile procedure. . . . Science is not a mere collection of discoveries, science is the process of discovering. In any case, it's not established once and for all; it's evolving.
> (MMR, p. 273)

She gives credit to her laboratory studies for the "precision, economy of statement, logic employed to ends that are disinterested, drawing and identifying," which "liberate--at least have some bearing on--the imagination" (MMR, pp. 254-255).

That she does not confuse the scientist's role with that of the poet, however, is indicated by her comment that "lots of scientists don't stand forth as litterateurs." The difference between the literalness of science and the literalness of poetry is aptly stated by Miss Moore herself in an often quoted passage from "Poetry," in which she implies that besides the "rawness" of raw material which poetry may have in common with science, there is in poetry the "genuine."

till the poets among us can be
'literalists of
the imagination'--above
insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, 'imaginary g ardens with real toads in them,'
shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,
the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness and
that which is on the other hand
genuine, you are interested in poetry.
(CP, p. 41)

One cannot perhaps stress too much two important points made in the above quotation: the "thingness" of the raw material suggested by the animal metaphor "real toads"; and the "genuine" reality of the imagination that is over and above plain zoological facts. The "genuine" includes

Hands that can grasp, eyes
that can dilate, hair that can rise
if it must.
(CP, p. 40)

She disagrees with Tolstoy who had said that "poetry is everything with the exception of business documents and school books" (CP, p. 157). To her, the subject of poetry could be everything including "business documents and school books." Her notes to the poems are testimony to the fact that she has taken material from just such sources that would appear to be the most unlikely places to find poetic subject to one used to the conventional sense of the poetic:

the Illustrated London News, Encyclopedia Britannica, National Geographic Magazine, Compleat Angler, Forest and Stream, Expositor's Bible, etcetera. Miss Moore's method brings to mind the comment of a nineteenth century writer:

> The poetic power that can swallow newspapers full of business, bankruptcy courts, sanitary commissions, wars, murders, and medical reports on the adulteration of food, and then reproduce them, as the conjuror brings out his coloured horn from his mouth after a meal of shavings, is poetic power.[10]

Miss Moore's theory of "thingness" in the "genuine" places her in the modern tradition. Important figures in modern literature and art have advocated "thingness" and have said so in no uncertain terms. John Ruskin, in his essay, "Of the Pathetic Fallacy," anticipates Miss Moore and her colleagues on this matter when, in discussing the association of the word "blue" with the gentian, he says:

> The word "Blue" does not mean the sensation caused by the gentian on the human eye; but it means the power of producing that sensation: and this power is always there, in the thing, whether we are there to experience it or not, and would remain there though there were not a man left on the face of the earth.[11]

He maintains that the poet who belongs to the "first order" is not "the man who perceives rightly because he does not feel, and to whom the primrose is very accurately the primrose, because he does not love it." Nor is he "the man who perceives wrongly, because he feels, and to whom the primrose is anything else than a primrose: a star, or a sun, or a fairy's shield, or a forsaken maiden." Rather, he is "the

man who perceives rightly in spite of his feelings, and to whom the primrose is forever nothing else than itself--a little flower apprehended in the very plain and leafy fact of it, whatever and how many soever the associations and passions may be that crowd around it."[12]

T. E. Hulme, who could not have had an inkling of Miss Moore's poetic work (he died in 1917), seems to have made a strikingly accurate description of her type of poetry in his specifications of what he calls the "classical" poem. Incidentally, Hulme's description may also apply to Imagist poetry which will be shown in a later section of this chapter to be not quite the same as Miss Moore's in its actual practice. In his essay, "Romanticism and Classicism," he speaks of "classical verse" as "dry, hard" and "sophisticated" which proves that "beauty may be in small dry things" and which has for its "great aim. . . accurate, precise and definite description." Hulme's definition of the metaphorical technique of "classical" poetry could serve as a fitting commentary to Miss Moore's descriptive and metaphoric uses of animal imagery. Hulme says:

> Poetry is not a counter language, but a visual concrete one. It is a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily. It always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process. It chooses fresh epithets and fresh metaphors, not so much because they are new, and we are tired of the old, but because the old cease to convey a physical thing, and become abstract counters.[13]

Miss Moore's treatment of "real toads" in her "imaginary gardens" also seems to find a parallel in the treatment of the image in painting as Jean-Paul Sartre sees it. In What Is Literature, Sartre speaks on the subject thus:

For the artist, the color, the bouquet, the tinkling of the spoon on the saucer, are things in the highest degree. He stops at the quality of the sound or form. He returns to it constantly and is enchanted with it. It is this color-object that he is going to transfer to his canvas, and the only modification he will make it undergo is that he will transfer it into an imaginary object. He is therefore as far as he can be from considering colors and signs as a language.[14]

A very recent exponent of the method, Jack Spicer, likens it to the technique of the collage.

I would like to make poems out of real objects. The lemon to be a lemon that the reader could cut or squeeze or taste--a real lemon like a newspaper in a collage is a real newspaper. . . . The poem is a collage of the real.[15]

Among Miss Moore's immediate colleagues, the Imagists, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, and William Carlos Williams are so closely associated with her, not only as theorists, but also as contemporary practitioners that they would figure prominently in a discussion of her "imaginary gardens with real toads." Pound, Stevens, and Williams have written critical essays on Miss Moore's poems, and she on theirs, in a manner mutually appreciative, implying perhaps that each recognizes in the other a more or less close kinship in the theory and practice of poetry. Williams, for example, says:

Work such as Miss Moore's holds its bloom today not by using slang, not by its moral abandon or puritannical steadfastness, but by the aesthetic pleasure engendered where pure craftmanship joins hard surfaces skilfully. . . . There are two elements essential to Miss Moore's scheme of composition, the hard and unaffected concept of the apple itself as an idea, then its edge to edge contact with the things which surround it--the coil of a snake, leaves at various depths, or as it may be; and without connectives unless it be poetry, the inevitable connective, if you will.[16]

Wallace Stevens, discussing poetic truth, makes a distinction between the encyclopedia reality or "the reality of isolated fact" and Miss Moore's "individual reality," the reality of the imagination.[17] The encyclopedia may offer exhaustive information.

But however exhaustive information of this kind may be there is something which it does not discover and that is particularity here and now. There is in reality, whether we think of it as animate or inanimate, human or subhuman, an aspect of individuality at which many forms of rational explanation stop short.[18]

The difference may not be adequately verbalized but it can be illustrated by setting the poetic statement side by side with the scientific statement on the same fact. Miss Moore's poetry offers a multitude of examples. Some of the poems may be compared with their scientific sources, information of which may sometimes be given in Miss Moore's notes to her poems; as for instance, "The Plumet Basilisk" to W. P. Pycraft's "The Frilled Lizard"[19] or "The Arctic Ox" to John J. Teal's "Golden Fleece of the Arctic."[20]

Among the shorter animal poems, "To a Chameleon" provides an interesting example of poetic reality as distinct from the "reality of isolated fact." The dictionary description of a chameleon runs in part:

> It has an extremely elastic extensible tongue which can be shot out nearly the length of the animal to take insects on which it feeds and it displays unusual ability to change the color of the skin in response to both external stimuli and internal factors.[21]

The quickness with which the chameleon takes its prey is described in The Animal Kingdom:

> Its mouth opens slowly and the pink, clublike end of its tongue protrudes. Abruptly the insect vanishes from its resting place. It happens so quickly that an observer gets only a fleeting glimpse of the tongue as it shoots out to its full length.[22]

Miss Moore's poem runs:

> Hid by the august foliage and fruit
> of the grape-vine
> twine
> your anatomy
> round the pruned and polished stem,
> Chameleon.
> Fire laid upon
> an emerald as long as
> the Dark King's massy
> one,
> could not snap the spectrum up for food
> as you have done.
> (MMR, p. 65)

Voice and address, a metaphor, and allusions to legend make Miss Moore's chameleon an imaginative reality which is different from the dictionary or The Animal Kingdom chameleon.

For more examples, one may take passages from two of Miss Moore's longer animal poems, "The Jerboa" and "The Pangolin."

> Scientific statement: The color of the jerboa varies more or less from locality to locality.[23]
>
> Poet's statement: It honours the sand by assuming its colour.
> (CP, p. 21)

The most striking character (of the pangolin) is a coat of overlapping horny scales, which cover the whole animal, with exception of the under surface of the body, and in some species the lower part of the tip of the tail.[24]

> Another armoured animal--scale
> lapping scale with spruce-cone regularity until they
> form the uninterrupted central
> tail-row! This near artichoke with head and legs and
> grit-equipped gizzard.
> (CP, p. 118)

All (pangolins) dwell in burrows, come abroad only at night and subsist almost altogether on ants and termites, which they capture by means of their long, ropelike, sticky tongues.[25]

> a true ant-eater
> not cockroach-eater, who endures
> exhausting solitary trips through unfamiliar ground at night,
> returning before sunrise; stepping in the moonlight,
> on the moonlight peculiarly, that the outside
> edges of his hands may bear the weight and save the claws
> for digging.
> (CP, p. 118)

These animals (pangolins) can roll themselves into a ball, and are then protected by their scales, and they exhibit remarkable strength in holding their bodies in this protective attitude.[26]

> rolls himself into a ball that has
> power to defy all effort to unroll it; strongly intailed, neat
> head for core, on neck not breaking off, with curled-in feet.
> (CP, p. 119)

One could go on drawing evidence from Marianne Moore's poetry to show that her animal poems are more than simple presentations of zoological life. Her exploitation of science is poetically controlled. In the above examples, for instance, one sees specific indications of such poetic control in the metaphorical associations of which the pangolin-artichoke identification is noteworthy; in the irony of the small jerboa "honouring the sand by assuming its color," thereby giving the jerboa a stature which scientific fact does not give it; in the tone of "amused and affectionate attention" (T. S. Eliot's term) suggested by the poet's insistence that the pangolin is "a true ant-eater/not cockroach-eater" and that its rolling itself into a ball, rather than a mere "protective attitude" as science describes it, is a posture of defiance.

Even when a poem is frankly derived from an essay on the subject, the poet's "genuine" is distinguishable. The details about Miss Moore's arctic ox are so closely derived from Teal's "Golden Fleece of the Arctic" that many lines in the poem would appear to the unwary reader as nothing more than verbatim quotations from the essay. The first two stanzas, for example, borrow two details about the arctic ox from Teal couched in statements almost identical to Teal's.

> Teal: The underwool cannot be sheared. . . . Since the musk ox enjoys petting and scratching, especially during the shedding season, all one needs to do is pull off the sheets, a job easier than taking off a sweater.[27]

Miss Moore:

> Wear
> qiviut--the underwool of the arctic ox--
> pulled off it like a sweater.
> (MMR, p. 75)

Teal: Sweaters, gloves, and other clothes made from it are so light that one scarcely feels that one has them on.[28]

Miss Moore:

> I would like a suit of
> qiviut, so light I did not
> know I had it on.
> (MMR, p. 75)

In Miss Moore, however, the details are complicated by the extensions of meaning from the physical to a "moral." The poet's experience of physical comfort gives rise to the experience of comfort one feels when, to get the material, one does not have to kill the animal that makes it. The whole passage runs:

> To wear the arctic fox
> you have to kill it. Wear
> qiviut--the underwool of the arctic ox--
> pulled off it like a sweater;
> your coat is warm; your conscience, better.
>
> I would like a suit of
> qiviut, so light I did not
> know I had it on; and in the
> course of time, another
> since I had not had to murder
>
> the "goat" that grew the fleece
> that made the first. . . .
> (MMR, p. 75)

Teal also says of the musk ox:

> Actually the musk ox is an odorless animal in terms of human perception. . . . The best test is that if one buries one's nose in its wet hair, the only thing to be smelled is water.[29]

Miss Moore picks up the same detail and produces effects obviously absent in Teal's.

> The musk ox
> has no musk and it is not an ox--
> illiterate epithet.
> Bury your nose in one when wet.
>
> It smells of water, nothing else,
> and browses goatlike on
> hind legs. Its great distinction
> is not egocentric scent
> but that it is intelligent.
> (MMR, p. 76)

The humor of "illiterate epithet" and the rather oblique reference to "its great distinction" mark Miss Moore's difference from Teal. While Teal does mention the smell and the intelligence of the arctic ox, he does not see these two qualities as points of comparison or suggest an anti-romantic attitude which would hold intelligence as superior to sweet fragrances. The poetic version may even be stretched further to include the implication that the poet, alluding to her aesthetics, would consider intelligence as more useful to the creation of poetic reality than personal emotion easily excited by aromatic airs or some such whimsicalities. In "Armour's Undermining Modesty," she states:

If tributes cannot be implicit,

give me diatribes and the fragrance of iodine,
the cork oak acorn grown in Spain;
the pale-ale-eyed impersonal look
which the sales-placard gives the bock beer buck.
(CP, p. 149)

Going back to the comparisons, the prose version may have humor too. It tells of how bulls fight each other for the cows during the mating season "until one feels that sex isn't worth it." It continues:

Many bulls decide that women just aren't worth it. They band together and form a completely male herd, choose a leader, and happily spend the summer in one another's company.[30]

The poetic imagination picks this up and, with a seemingly incongruous image from mythology associated with torture ("Procrustes bed") injects an ironic tone and enlarges on the humor.

While not incapable
of courtship, they may find its
servitude and flutter, too much
like Procrustes' bed;
so some decide to stay unwed.
(MMR, p. 76)

Miss Moore admits that her poem is "an advertisement." Though no such admission is made by Teal, the essay is indeed an advertisement for qiviut, which he calls "the golden fleece of the Arctic," and his experimental musk ox breeding farm in Vermont. Miss Moore's is an "advertisement" for the animal that bears this "golden fleece" as an animal of "armor," its "armor" being not only its warm light fleece, but also its warm light disposition.

They join you as you work;
love jumping in and out of holes,
  play in the water with the children,
learn fast, know their names,
will open gates and invent games.
(MMR, p. 76)

In short, the poem "advertises" a little-known animal "with golden fleece and winning ways." Teal's advertisement serves a practical end. Miss Moore's serves a poetic one--the making of an imaginative reality out of a thing. The almost verbatim quotations from Teal implement the "thingness," which, as the poem itself demonstrates, is the basis but not all of the "genuine." The difference between Teal's prose and Miss Moore's poem may be summed up as follows:

Prose usually proceeds unilaterally, from fact to fact, slurring associational and subsidiary meanings. Poetry (modern poetry to a far greater extent than eighteenth or nineteenth century poetry) functions tensionally, building its meanings internally, suggesting by metaphor, irony, paradox, etcetera the varied ways in which the facts relate to one another.[31]

In still another example, "The Plumet Basilisk," the "genuine" has for subject matter not only scientific fact about the animal supplied by a prose work as is the case with "The Arctic Ox," but also legend and miscellaneous material acquired by the poet from her readings. A long, complex poem in four sections, "The Plumet Basilisk" renders the basilisk of Central America in its relation to other lizards and to the myths and legends that men have made out of it and even to evolutionary theory. This makes

for a more complex method and more ramifications of relationships than those exhibited in "The Arctic Ox." The opening lines of the first section entitled "In Costa Rica" employ a device that Miss Moore uses rather frequently--a casual, but surprisingly frontal, introduction of the animal.

> In blazing driftwood
> the green keeps showing at the same place;
> as, intermittently, the fire-opal shows blue and green.
> (CP, p. 25)

No sooner is the Costa Rican lizard distinguished from the landscape he is taken for at first than he is thought of in terms of his counterpart in Chinese mythology--"the true Chinese lizard face. . . the amphibious falling dragon" (CP, p. 25). One is thus reminded that the lizard was a dragon of mythology and art (Miss Moore's source is an article on Chinese porcelain art). The association with myth and legend persists in the next lines. Whereas Miss Moore's scientific source, W. P. Pycraft, merely states that the arboreal basilisk "will, when alarmed, drop to the water and scuttle along the surface on its hind legs. . . (and) can also dive to the bottom and there find safety till the danger is past."[32] Miss Moore presents the basilisk, first, as a royal acrobat (he is a "king" who "meets his likeness in the stream" and who "faints upon the air" before diving to his stream-bed); then in terms of a metaphor linking animal to ancient royalty which, according to the legend of El Dorado, plunged into Guatavita Lake "powdered

with gold dust as symbolic of the sun" in a yearly tribute to the goddess of the lake (Notes, CP, pp. 154-155); then as a god who runs, flies, and swims to

> his basilica--'the ruler of Rivers, Lakes and Seas,
> invisible or visible', with clouds to do
> as bid--and can be 'long or short, and also coarse or fine at
> pleasure'.
>
> (CP, p. 26)

This linking of persons, places, and things which are obviously far removed from the poem's actual physical setting predominates in "The Plumet Basilisk."

The link between the Costa Rican basilisk and the Malay dragon (the latter gives the title to the second section) is scientifically sound, as is the description of the Malay dragon's physical features and curious method of locomotion. After the zoological description, however, the Malay dragon, as was the case with the basilisk, is presented as a god ("the true divinity of Malay. . . the harmless god"); and a "serpent-dove," a term that could be seen as "poetic" especially when compared to Pycraft's "the flying snake,"[33] since the epithet not only aptly describes the locomotion of the animal--serpent-like, it creeps, but dove-like, it can fly from heights with "wings" that are actually elongated ribs--but is itself an oxymoron suggesting the paradox of fierceness and gentility in the same animal. It looks deadly when it shows its armature of teeth to its adversary, but it will take to flight when

confronted. It is rumored to have a look that can kill, but is actually a lizard "men can kill." The term "serpent-dove" also has mythological connotations, but no sooner is the animal linked with myth once again than it is rendered in terms of ordinary animal images. The "serpent-dove" also

> lives as the butterfly or bat
> can, in a brood, conferring wings on what it grasps, as the
> air-plant does.
> (CP, p. 27)

The link between the basilisk and the New Zealand tuatera, which furnishes the title of the third section, brings in allusions to evolutionary theory. Scientifically, the tuatera is known as "the living fossil," the sole survivor of an ancient group of reptiles known as the Rhynchocephalia or "beak-heads." Scientifically it is only superficially similar to the basilisk since its fundamental structure is so distinct from the latter.[34] The first stanza of this section of the poem which depicts a "pleasing. . . bird-reptile social life" (birds toddle in and out of sea lizards' tails "laid criss-cross aligator style") also alludes to evolutionary theory which holds "that birds evolved from reptiles" just like mammals, but "have remained more like reptiles than have mammals."[35] The allusion is made contemporary by the statement that "a tuatera will tolerate a petrel in its den" (CP, p. 27). The lines that follow make more links of the tuatera to the dragon of Chinese mythology:

(the tuatera) lays ten eggs
or nine--the number laid by dragons since 'a true dragon
has nine sons'.

to contemporary species of lizards:

The frilled lizard, the kind with no legs,
and the three-horned chameleon, are non-serious ones that
take to flight.
(CP, p. 27)

and to dragons carved over the door of the bourse in Copenhagen ("the four green tails conspiring upright, symbolizing four-fold security").

The last section returns to the Costa Rican basilisk. Detailed scientific description which accentuates the vitality and energy of the basilisk is made non-clinical by links made to painting and music:

By the
Chinese brush, eight green

bands are painted on
the tail--as piano keys are barred
by five black stripes across the white. This octave of faulty
decorum hides the extraordinary lizard
till nightfall.
(CP, p. 28)

to myth:

the plumet portrays
mythology's wish
to be interchangeably man and fish--
(CP, p. 29)

the innocent, rare, gold-
defending dragon.
(CP, p. 30)

to history:

This is our Tower-of-London
jewel that the Spaniards failed to see, among the feather
capes and hawk's--

head moths and black-chinned
humming-birds.
(CP, p. 30)

to legends of lost or undiscovered treasures:

Thinking himself hid among the yet unfound jade axe-heads,
silver jaguars and bats, and amethysts and
polished iron, gold in a ten-ton chain, and pearls the size of
pigeon-eggs.
(CP, p. 30)

The climactic manifestation of the basilisk's vitality is also partly built up by the vitality of "the woods' acoustic shell." Sounds in a lush Costa Rican forest at night are projected in terms of aural imagery that implies a merger between civilization (mainly carried by musical instrument sounds) and nature (mainly carried by animal sounds).

the welcome dark--with the galloped
ground-bass of the military drum, the squeak of bag-pipes
and of bats. Hollow whistled monkey-notes disrupt
the castanets. Taps from the back of the bow sound odd on
last year's gourd,

or when they touch the
kettledrums--at which, for there's no light,
a scared frog screaming like a bird, leaps out from the weeds.
(CP, p. 28)

There is also "sound from porcupine-quilled palm-trees blurring at the edge, that rattle like rain" (CP, p. 30). In the climactic stanza, sound marks the retreat of the animal from the observer's eye to a

physical return to the water, and, more important still, to a kind of spiritual return to his "armor" ("his basilisk cocoon"). This implies a renewal of the animal's virility and divinity by a return to the fountainhead.

> he is alive there
> in his basilisk cocoon beneath
> the one of living green; his quicksilver ferocity
> quenched in the rustle of his fall into the sheath
> which is the shattering sudden splash that marks his
> temporary loss.
> (CP, p. 30)

The above analysis of "The Plumet Basilisk" undoubtedly proves that Miss Moore's animal poems are more than exact zoological reporting. The overwhelmingly rich detail, scientific and mythical, provides the context for the "genuine," which cannot be equated with broad generalizations and easy abstractions, since even the quotidian in it becomes strange, saying more than what appears, saying much that cannot be caught in a paraphrase. In Wallace Stevens' terms, the "genuine" consists of "the conjunction of 'imaginary gardens' with 'real toads'. . . an association of the true and the false."[36] The poem may have "an extraordinarily factual appearance, but it is after all an abstraction"[37]; that is, an abstraction of the imagination. Miss Moore herself asks:

> What is more precise than precision? Illusion.
> (CP, p. 149)

It is clear that the poet is committed, not so much to things for their own sake, but to the act of perceiving them--the act of the imagination. She had said of art:

> It comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
> it must be 'lit with piercing glances into the life of things'
> (CP, p. 55)

Thus it is that even over the matter of details, she exercises selectiveness and ignores laboratory details on the animal not relevant to the "illusion," on the one hand, or deliberately takes details from myth, legend, hearsay, and unscientific natural history on occasion, on the other. Like her hero, the poet is out for "the rock crystal thing to see" (CP, p. 16) but recognizes and respects that thing's ultimate mystery. That mystery is retained in spite of the apparently minute preciseness and immediate accuracy of the description which gives the poem that "extraordinarily factual appearance." The animals she describes are not always familiar to her readers. In addition to obscure ones like the jerboa and the pangolin, she speaks of fabulous ones like the unicorn, the cockatrice, and the kylin and the Chinese dragon which are seen only in the decoration of Chinese porcelain. Even with familiar animals, a distancing is effected partly by the laboratory details themselves, knowledge of which is after all not very common, and partly by fresh, often startling, associations between the animate and the inanimate which the poet makes and which,

as previous examples show, may result in a grotesqueness, of a sort, in the familiar. That the modern tradition accepts this approach is valid, is attested to by Wolfgang Kayser when he says:

> Even in animals that are familiar to him, modern man may experience the strangeness of something totally different from himself and suggestive of abysmal ominousness.[38]

Some critics consider Miss Moore's use of obviously grotesque and incongruous imagery not as a means of achieving aesthetic distance or of ordering into a new imaginative perspective but as some kind of eccentricity. Randall Jarrell says:

> Marianne Moore, in spite of restraint unparalleled, is a natural, excessive, and magnificent eccentric. . . . Eccentricity has been to her a first resort, an easy but inescapable refuge.[39]

To this charge one could say that the many examples of seemingly incongruous associations do become meaningful and startle the reader, particularly into an awareness of fresh patterns of correspondences. Rather than eccentricity, this is an indication of poetic power. Miss Moore herself, when accused of digressing from the topic once in a conversation, quoted Aristotle as saying: "It is the mark of a poet to see a connection between apparently incongruous things."[40] Some serious modern critics bear her out. Maritain speaks of the poetic imagination for which nothing is ready-made and of the intuitive power of the intellect which brings two things naturally distant from one another together resulting in an image that is new, fresh, and unforesee-

able.[41] His example is Marianne Moore's "lion's ferocious chrysanthemum head." Philip Wheelwright calls this type of metaphor the "diaphor--the sheer presentation of diverse particulars in a newly designed arrangement."[42]

As one goes through Miss Moore's animal poetry, one is inclined to agree with Maritain that nothing in it is ready-made. It is in a sense exploratory in that it does not work toward an imposed meaning. As stated previously, meaning is derived from an intense observation of sharply-edged images which remain essentially themselves, not blurred or defaced by the associations made on it. The exploratory quality of the poetry also gives rise to the possibility of other meanings. Miss Moore's poetry is thus a contrast to another type of poetry which works toward meaning and appropriates its individual images accordingly.

The differences are obvious when one compares Miss Moore to a nineteenth century poet like Tennyson. Tennyson's "The Grasshopper" and Miss Moore's "The Wood-Weasel" may serve the purposes of comparison since in both, the poet's attitude toward the animal is somewhat similar. "I would dwell with thee, merry grasshopper," says Tennyson. "Wood-weasels shall associate with me," says Miss Moore. The treatment of the animal image, however,

presents a difference which one would expect, considering the cultural, environmental, and historical gap between the two poets. For the moment, one is less interested in causes than in the difference of the handling of imagery. Tennyson's physical description of the grasshopper is confined to a few lines in the first stanza. It is "an insect lithe and strong" with "shielded sides" and "vaulting on. . . airy feet." It is "a mailed warrior in youth and strength complete;/armed cap-a-pie." The second stanza, as is much of the first stanza, is purely lyrical. The first eight lines of the second stanza are symptomatic of the lyricism throughout.

> I would dwell with thee,
> Merry grasshopper,
> Thou art so glad and free,
> And as light as air;
> Thou hast no sorrow or tears,
> Thou hast no compt of years,
> No withered immortality,
> But a short youth sunny and free.[43]

There is hardly any objective description of Tennyson's grasshopper to speak of. This is so because the poet is not concerned with showing the reader how "the thing" looks, smells, sounds, or moves. He is using it for an end other than "thingness"--to communicate his pleasure (rhapsody, if you will) at seeing a creature in joyful abandon in its natural world. The poem becomes a purely personal lyrical outburst.

Miss Moore, on the other hand, presents her wood-weasel with a concern for "thingness." She wants the reader to see what the skunk looks like in its own sharp contours. As shown in the first chapter of this thesis, in which the poem is extensively quoted, physical description rescues the poem from lapsing into mere cuteness or sentimentality or playfulness. There are ideas, no doubt, since the objectivist's rule as voiced by William Carlos Williams, "no ideas but in things,"[44] implies that there are ideas, nevertheless. The skunk is "wood-warden," "determination's totem," "noble little warrior," and

> this same weasel's playful and his weasel
> friends are, not incongruously.
> Wood-weasels shall associate with me.
> (CP, p. 128)

Yet the reader does not get a sense of the image used to serve the idea. He never loses sight of the skunk in the maze of ideas and feelings about it.

The above statements of comparison should be qualified, however. Miss Moore may, on occasion, use imagery with as little concern for "thingness" as Tennyson, especially in poems like "In Distrust of Merits" or "Keeping Their World Large" in which she is more a rhetorician than a precisionist. Tennyson, on the other hand, may write a poem like "The Eagle," a brief poem of six lines which some critics would call "descriptive,"[45] and which, to a certain extent, does project

the eagleness of the eagle. However, the comparisons are made with the typical practice of the poets concerned in mind, in which case exceptions need not be considered. The same qualification must be made for the comparisons that follow.

Miss Moore's animal poems may also be profitably compared with those of some of her contemporaries who are considered "nature" poets in the twentieth century sense; that is, poets who have discarded an early Romantic view of nature as so orderly and unified with man that it is an evidence of God's existence on earth, and have become increasingly aware of the Darwinian view of nature as a mindless force with a "non-human otherness."[46]

Robert Frost, in many of his poems, shows signs of being influenced by such a view of nature. His "drumlin woodchuck" resembles Miss Moore's animals of armor, animals which in one way or other--coloring, thick skin, hides, scales, or guile, ingenuity, restraint, fortitude and the like--protect themselves as best they can from an indifferent physical world. Robert Frost uses the woodchuck to depict its relationship with the world

> As one who shrewdly pretends
> That he and the world are friends.

and to convey the idea of survival through common sense and instinc-

tive thoroughness. The last two stanzas run:

> If I can with confidence say
> That still for another day,
> Or even another year,
> I will be there for you, my dear,
>
> It will be because, though small
> As measured against the All,
> I have been so instinctively thorough
> About my crevice and burrow.[47]

The animal image is used in Frost's poem mainly to evoke a meaning such that minute physical description of the animal to give it a convincing "thingness" could be unnecessary. Miss Moore, "studying the animal in its own right,"[48] arrives at a somewhat similar notion after a close observation of the plumet basilisk which dives to its "basilisk cocoon" or the frigate pelican which sleeps in the mangrove swamp

> to foil the tired
> moment of danger that lays on heart and lungs the
> weight of the python that crushes to powder.
> (CP, p. 32)

This does not mean that her method produces better effects than Frost's. Rather, different methods produce different effects. The "hard surface" of Miss Moore's animal image results in more visual sharpness and less abstraction than Frost's.

"Thingness" in Miss Moore's "imaginary garden" is sometimes taken to be synonymous with the objectivity of the Imagists. Stanley Coffman holds:

Yet there is much in her poetry also that could be called Imagism: its obsession with exactness of detail, with clarity of impression, with making the object real, even though it appear in context created by the poetic imagination.[49]

He continues to suggest that Miss Moore is less objective than the Imagists because she achieves her effects "without the complete exclusion of the poet that one associates with Imagism." However, this last comment may not be an accurate one because the Imagists did aim for "the direct treatment of the thing, whether subjective or objective."[50] The "thing" to the Imagists, therefore, is not necessarily part of the physical world. Pound, the Imagists' spokesman, admonishes further: "Don't be descriptive; remember that a painter can describe a landscape much better than you can, and that he has to know a deal more about it."[51] As examples given previously show, Miss Moore's technique is primarily descriptive and is akin to modern painting which spreads a number of essential but fragmented details on canvas rather than group details around a central figure.

Pound holds up H. D. 's "Oread" as the ideal Imagist poem. It runs:

> Whirl up, sea--
> whirl your pointed pines,
> splash your great pines
> on our rocks,
> hurl your green over us,
> cover us with your pools of fir.[52]

The poem may be successful in terms of communication. H. D. 's sea, however, does not invite inspection to itself like Miss Moore's sea in "The Fish" and "A Grave," already discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. Though H. D. 's presentation of the image is more objective than Tennyson's or Frost's, the sea is described not in terms of itself but in terms of pine trees. Her method is thus essentially metaphorical with a one-to-one parallel between sea and pine forest. Putting it rather mechanically, sea equals pine forest, and the details fall into a pattern: waves equal pine trees, whirlpools equal pools of fir, etcetera. Miss Moore's sea is the sea itself and the reader's view of it is unclouded by the associations and feelings about it. When Miss Moore does use metaphor, her technique reminds one of a comment that Ruskin makes on the technique of Dante:

> When Dante describes the spirits falling from the bank of Acheron "as dead leaves flutter from a bough," he gives the most perfect image possible of their utter lightness, feebleness, passiveness, and scattering agony of despair, without, however, for an instant, losing his own clear perception that <u>these</u> are souls, and <u>those</u> are leaves; he makes no confusion of one with the other.[52]

In connection with Miss Moore's "imaginary gardens with real toads in them," one would have to bring in Wallace Stevens. As shown previously, Stevens, in theory, definitely supports Miss Moore on the matter of "thingness" in the "genuine." The statement of Stevens that probably comes closest to Miss Moore's lines from "Poetry" quoted

previously is contained in his poem, "Somnambulisma." Here, Stevens, using bird imagery, contends that the "universe" of poetry "would be a geography of the dead" if it was a place

> in which they (the birds) lacked a pervasive being,
>
> In which no scholar, separately dwelling,
> Poured forth the fine fins, the gawky beaks, the personalia
> Which, as a man feeling everything, were his.[54]

Stevens' scholar is easily reminiscent of Miss Moore's "literalist of the imagination."

In practice, however, there is a divergence between the two poets on the aspect of "thingness." Though Stevens' images may leave sharp impressions on the senses, the effect is not brought about by a close detailed description of the object's physical lineaments, as in Miss Moore. Perhaps the point can be clarified by illustration. As pointed out previously, Miss Moore's image in one poem for the energy that threatens to annihilate the "dark energy of life" is "an octopus of ice."

> 'Picking periwinkles from the cracks'
> or killing prey with the concentric crushing rigour of the python,
> it hovers forward 'spider fashion
> on its arms' misleadingly like lace;
> its 'ghostly pallor changing
> to the green metallic tinge of an anemone-starred pool'.
> (CP, p. 78)

The reader gets a sense of this dreadful threat by looking at a "thing" whose physical contours bear unmistakably the violence underlying

its "misleading" delicacy. In Stevens' "Domination of Black," this threat of annihilation finds an image in the crying peacocks, but rather than "peacockness" rendered in minute, precise physical description, the peacock image is merged with images of sound, color and motion such that the total effect is "perfectly phantasmogoric."[55] The poem runs:

At night, by the fire,
The colors of the bushes
And of the fallen leaves,
Repeating themselves,
Turned in the room,
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind.
Yes: but the color of the heavy hemlocks
Came striding.
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

The colors of their tails
Were like leaves themselves
Turning in the wind,
In the twilight wind.
They swept over the room,
Just as they flew from the boughs of the hemlocks
Down to the ground.
I heard them cry--the peacocks.
Was it a cry against the twilight
Or against the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind
Turning as the flames
Turned in the fire,
Turning as the tails of the peacocks
Turned in the loud fire,
Loud as the hemlocks
Full of the cry of the peacocks?
Or was it the cry of the hemlocks?

> Out of the window,
> I saw how the planets gathered
> Like the leaves themselves
> Turning in the wind.
> I saw how the night came,
> Came striding like the color of the heavy hemlocks
> I felt afraid.
> And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.[56]

Images of sound, color, and bird keep suggesting or turning into one another or repeating themselves. Fire suggests leaves, leaves hemlocks, hemlocks peacocks, peacocks leaves, leaves fire and peacocks, fire hemlocks, hemlocks peacocks, planets leaves, night hemlocks, and so on. The main motion of turning augments the dizzying effect. Moving images not only keep turning but they come striding into the room, sweeping over the room, and gathering. A complete sense of confusion and fear for annihilation, a fear of "the domination of black," are well-defined. The only conceptualized statement, "I felt afriad," becomes an intense understatement coming as it does after the elaborately developed imagery.

No doubt there is much power in the poem. No doubt, also, the effects in the poem are produced by a method different from Miss Moore's. In Stevens there is no literal physicality of the animal. To explain further, in Miss Moore, one looks at a poem proceeding from an animal in the flesh, whereas in Stevens one sees instead an animal as an apparition, an optical hallucination. The phantasmagoric quality of Stevens' animal imagery can be detected in a number of examples:[57]

cocks' tails tossing, glittering, flaring, blustering, spreading to the sun, streaming to the moon; the blackbird whirling in the autumn winds; twenty snowy mountains with the eye of the blackbird the only moving thing; the bantam that is the "damned universal cock, as if the sun/ Was blackamoor to bear its blazing tail"' the howling dove in the spring; the mouse with "eminent thunder" grinding in the arches of the church and perhaps swallowing the steeple in its time; the fat cat shrinking to a "bug in the grass" and the rabbit bloating, "humped higher and higher. . . /[its] head like a carving in space"; swine-like rivers suckling themselves, making "bland belly sounds in somnolent troughs"; the lion coming down to drink with ruddy eyes and claws "when light comes down to wet his frothy jaws"; etcetera. The grotesque is very much in evidence in Stevens' animal imagery and, as shown earlier, in Miss Moore's too, but the grotesque in Miss Moore's is still attached to a physical being which one recognizes as actually inhabiting the physical world, while the grotesque in Stevens' suggests "an estranged world" in which "familiar and natural" elements "suddenly turn out to be strange and ominous."[58] The point of difference may be traced to a difference in the focus of vision. In Stevens, the eye is more on an internal landscape--which is characteristic of his mental and aesthetic attitude--while in Miss Moore it is more on the external. The question of which of the two would be more realistic would not bother

Stevens who has asserted that there are "thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird" and that

> Crow is realist. But, then
> Oriole, also, may be realist.[59]

Another "realist," William Carlos Williams, may come closest to Miss Moore on the aspect of "thingness." As mentioned earlier, Williams advocates "no ideas but in things."[60] The classic example in Williams of the thing remaining itself under the most intense gaze is the red wheelbarrow. Miss Moore obtains the same effect, more or less, by a meticulous scrutiny of the paper nautilus. The reader, looking at these objects, may be aware only of them, missing the point each may be making. There are points or ideas, but the communication of these does not blur the outlines of the image. Even when the details have a metaphoric function, they remain themselves not merged or absorbed into the whole.

Yet, even between these two objectivists, there are differences. On the particular matter of animal imagery, Williams' menagerie consists mostly of common birds or fish or domestics like horse, cat, dog, goat, and the like, and these are often presented so familiarly and close at hand; that is, without any distancing. With Miss Moore, as pointed out in previous chapters, many of her animals are exotic and unfamiliar, and even when familiar, they are seen at a scientific distance.

Also, Miss Moore chooses an image which, if scrutinized carefully enough, may yield a "moral" or a "point" which Miss Moore sometimes expresses explicitly. Williams presents phenomena as they are and very often lets his description go without comment. His images seem more autonomous than Miss Moore's. A short poem from each may illustrate the point. Miss Moore places the physical contours and movements of a jellyfish (the full text of the poem in the second chapter) under microscopic observation and ends with the comment, "You abandon your intent." Williams brings the same kind of observation on a cat and writes the short "Poem."

As the cat
climbed over
the top of

the jamcloset
first the right
forefoot

carefully
then the hind
stepped down

into the pit of
the empty
flowerpot[61]

Williams draws himself out of the poem completely while such is not the case with Miss Moore in "A Jellyfish." Williams' "Poem" is a good example of what Randall Jarrell probably meant when in his introduction to Williams' Selected Poems, he writes:

Some of the poems seem to say "Truth is enough"--truth meaning data brought back alive.[62]

One could very well agree with Jarrell when he calls Williams "the most pragmatic of writers."[63]

As shown in the above comparisons, Miss Moore is an objectivist with a literalness of manner more nearly approaching Williams. It is this literalness of manner, this precision that may have lead some critics to conclude that in Miss Moore's poems, emotion is either insufficient or completely absent. Margaret Anderson calls her poetry "intellectual poetry" and goes on to assert that "intellectual poetry is not poetry."

There is no idea in intellectual poetry that cannot be better expressed in prose. There is no emotion in intellectual poetry that springs from the affirmed permanent emotions of mankind.

Eliot is a poet--he uses his mind to reveal the life of his emotions. Marianne Moore is an intellectual--she uses the life of her mind as subject matter.[64]

Eugene Davidson, in his review of Miss Moore's Selected Poems, states:

Her poetry is aloof, stiff, occasionally splendid with imagery and despite her concern with minutiae of color and observation of living things, the poetry is cool (Mr. Eliot has warned against calling it "frigid") and poised remotely over birds, fish, animals and objets d'art that appeal to her.[65]

Maritain, in a passage already quoted in the first pages of this chapter, says that poets like Miss Moore are afraid to acknowledge "the subjectivity of their experience." He adds:

I would say that the kind of modesty to which I have alluded--which causes a poet to fly from the inwardness of poetic experience toward the world of sensory perception, and to conceal the vastness of his soul in the colors of a lizard or a tulip--should some day yield to the pressure of what exists in him.[66]

On the other hand, Ezra Pound, while admitting that Miss Moore writes "logopoeia. . . which is a dance of the intelligence among words and ideas and modification of ideas and characters. . . a mind cry more than a heart cry," also says, "In the verse of Marianne Moore I detect traces of emotion."[67] T. S. Eliot gives a convincing reason for his stand on the matter. He holds that the choice of subject matter that allows the poet "the most powerful and most secret release" is "a personal affair."

The result is often something that the majority will call frigid; for to feel in one's own way, however intensely, is likely to look like frigidity to those who can feel only in accepted ways.[68]

He quotes from Miss Moore's "Silence":

> The deepest feeling always shows itself in silence;
> not in silence, but restraint.
> (CP, p. 95)

The above passage from "Silence" is an indication that Miss Moore does recognize feeling as inherent in poetry but it must be a feeling kept under control if it has to effect a poetic empathy. She has expressed the idea in some passages of her prose. She starts the essay, "Feeling and Precison," with these statements:

> Feeling at its deepest--as we all have reason to know--tends to be inarticulate. If it does manage to be articulate, it is likely to seem overcondensed, so that the author is resisted as being enigmatic or disobliging or arrogant.
>
> (Predilections, p. 3)

Making observations on other writers, she cites Henry James as "so susceptible to emotion as to be obliged to seem unemotional" (Predilections, pp. 10-11), and Daniel Berkeley Updike as one who has always seemed to her "a phenomenon of eloquence because of the quiet objectiveness of his writing" (Predilections, p. 13). Again, she equates the "silence" that is a "restraint" with eloquence when, in her review of Wallace Stevens' Harmonium, Ideas of Order, and Owl's Clover, she states that "the testament to emotion is not volubility" and that Stevens' "refusal to speak results. . . in an eloquence" (Predilections, p. 36).

Miss Moore's stand on this matter of feeling and restraint brings in once again such modern critics on art and literature as Ruskin and Hulme. Ruskin, in connection with a statement he made about poetry of the first order, had also said that poets of the first order are "men who feel strongly, think strongly, and see truly." Ruskin explains further that the man who knows, perceives, and feels too much of the past and the future and of things surrounding him will not be immediately unbalanced by a new exciting sight. He remains steadfast.

> He is tender to impression at the surface, like a rock with deep moss upon it; but there is too much mass of him to be moved. The smaller man, with the same degree of sensibility, is at once carried off his feet; he wants to do something he did not want to do before; he views

the universe in a new light through his tears; he is gay or enthusiastic, melancholy or passionate, as things come and go to him. Therefore, the creative poet might even be thought, to a great extent, impassive (as shallow people think Dante stern), receiving indeed all feelings to the full, but having a great centre of reflection and knowledge in which he stands serene, and watches the feeling, as it were, from afar off. . . . . .
It is one of the signs of the highest power in a writer. . . to keep his eyes fixed firmly on the pure fact, out of which if any feeling comes to him or his reader, he knows it must be the true one.[69]

T. E. Hulme, talking about the classical poet, maintains:

Even in the most imaginative flights there is always a holding back, a reservation. The classical poet never forgets this finiteness, this limit of man. He remembers always that he is mixed up with earth. He may jump, but he always returns back; he never flies away into the circumambient gas.[70]

Miss Moore, like Hulme's classical poet, never "flies away into the circumambient gas." Rather, she is "faithful to the conception of a limit." There is emotion in her poetry, but it is not easily detected by one used to the revelation of feeling "only in accepted ways." She is not like the nineteenth century oratorical poet expounding moral truth in sonorous, ringing tones. She does not utter "the rhapsodic cry." She is like "The Student"

too reclusive for
some things to seem to touch
him, not because he
has no feeling but because he has too much.
(WAY, p. 16)

A clear appraisal of what emotion is not in Miss Moore's poetry is given by Zabel:

She stands poles removed from the poets of disembodied emotion, of Love, Honor, Hope, Desire, and Passion in capitalized abstraction. She does not write in the large and easy generality of sentiment or sensation. She has written about animals without dramatizing her pity, about wedlock without mentioning love, about America with none of the usages of patriotism, and about death without parading awe or reverence. But it would be difficult to name four poems more poignant in their sense of these emotions, or more accurate in justifying them, than "The Buffalo," "Marriage," "England," and "A Grave."[71]

The reader's choice of such poems of Miss Moore that are "poignant" with emotion may vary, but as one goes through her published poetry, one becomes convinced that it is not true that Miss Moore writes purely "intellectual poetry," in Margaret Anderson's sense of the term. In the first place, Miss Moore, in less characteristic fashion, has written poems that are overtly emotional such as "In Distrust of Merits," "What Are Years," and "Nevertheless." She selected "What Are Years" as her best poem, showing thereby her approval of one of her most emotional poems and the importance of emotion for her. In the bird image of its final stanza, she concretizes a restraint in feeling, the limitation in freedom, out of which is derived a joy that is not a mere satisfaction, a mortality that is paradoxically an eternity.

> So he who strongly feels
> behaves. The very bird,
> grown taller as he sings, steels
> his form straight up. Though he is captive,
> his mighty singing
> says, satisfaction is a lowly
> thing, how pure a thing is joy.
> This is mortality,
> this is eternity.
> (WAY, p. 1)

On her more familiar ground, Miss Moore secures her feelings, as well as judgments, to facts. It is these poems that may have given rise to the critical opinion that she writes "intellectual poetry." This kind of criticism seems to imply a dichotomy between the intellectual and the emotional,but it can be shown that in Miss Moore there is no such separation of mind, senses, and emotion. She reminds one of Ruskin's poets of the first order "who feel strongly, think strongly, see truly." Objectiveness and precision, the proliferation of images with "edge"--rather than indicating an aloofness and stiffness of intellectual poetry--would show instead a pervasive emotion. Miss Moore has expressed herself on the necessity of giving an emotional experience a hard and strong texture by means of "the relentless accuracy" of details. In "Feeling and Precision," she says:

> Wallace Stevens, referring to poetry under the metaphor of the lion, says, "It can kill a man." Yet the lion's leap would be mitigated almost to harmlessness if the lion were clawless, so precision is both impact and exactitude.
>
> (Predilections, p. 4)

For illustration, one may recall poems already discussed in previous chapters. It has been shown in the analysis of "Melancthon" how a detailed observation on the elephant's tough hide and "indestructibility of matter" reaches "a crescendo" of lyrical intensity in the final lines as the poet recognizes the animal's indestructibility of spirit, "the beautiful element of unreason" under its thick skin. It

has also been shown in the analysis of "The Jerboa" that after fifteen stanzas of detailed description of animals held captive or exploited for the sake of pomp, luxury, and human vanity, evoking thereby a sense of suffocation for the artificiality and excessive opulence and oppression of the Pharaohs, the spring is released and the jerboa comes into the scene. The emotional release is made obvious by the ecstatic statement:

> O rest and
> joy, the boundless sand,
> the stupendous sand-spout,
> no water, no palm-trees, no ivory bed,
> tiny cactus; but one would not be he
> who has nothing but plenty.
> (CP, p. 20)

The specific expression of emotion in this poem does not come as a sudden outburst of lyricism. It is a climax that comes from inside the poem, a kind of interiorized emotional climax, so to speak. Emotion is attached to the catalogue of images and details, and no sooner is it specifically expressed than it returns the reader specifically to the thought, implied in the ironic, negative phrases and statement.

In some other poems the emotion is implied rather than specifically expressed. In "He Digesteth Harde Yron," the poet, describing the ostrich, gives the following details about it: it is a symbol of justice; it watches its eggs "with a maternal concentration"; it is swifter than a horse, has a foot hard as a hoof, is more suspicious than a

leopard. The lines that follow give more details but one intuits an emotion from them:

> How
> could he, prized for plumes and eggs and young, used
> even as a riding-
> beast, respect men hiding
> actor-like in ostrich skins, with
> the right hand making the neck move as if alive and
> from a bag the left hand
>
> strewing grain, that ostriches
> might be decoyed and killed!

Many more details give rise to "a meaning always missed by the externalist." In that meaning there is not only thought but also emotion. They make up the invisible that is "the power of the visible."

From the minute details in the description of the way the paper nautilus makes its shell and of the care it gives its "intensively watched eggs," emotion is evoked in the opening stanza:

> For authorities whose hopes
> are shaped by mercenaries?
> Writers entrapped by
> teatime fame and by
> commuter's comfort? Not for these
> the paper nautilus
> constructs her thin glass shell.

A close look at the hatching of the eggs from the shell which had been "buried eight-fold" in the nautilus' eight arms, leaving the shell also free, results in more details with affective connotations. The freed shell becomes

wasp-nest flaws
of white on white, and close-
laid Ionic chiton-folds
like the lines in the mane of
a Parthenon horse,
round which the arms had
would themselves as if they knew love
is the only fortress
strong enough to trust to.
(CP, pp. 122-123)

These are but a few examples, but they may be sufficient to prove that there is emotion in Miss Moore's poems. Since the poet would not have her "lion clawless," however, there is no softness in the rendering of the emotional experience. What is not in the poems is not emotion but sentimentalism. As shown in the given examples, the lapse into sentimentalism is prevented mainly by the evocation of an affective response from a close observation of "hard-surfaced" imagery, the sensory details of which are bound with thought and knowledge. There is thus an integration, rather than a dichotomy, of the affective and the cognitive. The mind

tears off the veil; tears
the temptation, the
mist the heart wears,
from its eyes, --if the heart
has a face. . .
(CP. 134)

From the above discussion of the affective aspect of Miss Moore's poetry, one goes back to what this thesis started with--animal imagery in her poetry. This study of the particulars of her poetic menagerie has

led to a consideration of her aesthetics. Such a trend of discussion is perhaps inevitable. It has been shown in an analysis of "An Octopus" in the first chapter, how a poem that is an "observation" of an animal becomes also an "observation" of its own decorum as poem. In a few cases the correspondence between the two "observations" is made explicit. In "To a Snail," for instance, the snail becomes the image of compression in style.

> If 'compression is the first grace of style',
> you have it. Contractility is a virtue
> as modesty is a virtue.
> It is not the acquisition of any one thing
> that is able to adorn,
> or the incidental quality that occurs
> as a concomitant of something well said,
> that we value in style,
> but the principle that is hid:
> in the absence of feet, 'a method of conclusions';
> 'a knowledge of principles',
> in the curious phenomenon of your occipital horn.
> (CP, p. 91)

In some other cases the aesthetics is implied. It is suggested in "the capacity for fact," "relentless accuracy," "neatness of finish" of the octopus of ice (CP, p. 84): in "the unconfiding frigate bird" hiding "in the height and the majestic display of his art"; in the ostrich that "digesteth harde yron"; in the paper nautilus

> Giving her perishable
> souvenir of hope, a dull
> white outside and smooth-
> edged inner surface
> glossy as the sea;

in the "pure form" of the snake

> the essentially Greek, the plastic, animal all of a piece from nose to tail
>
> (CP, p. 65)

In still other cases an "observation" of the animal image results not so much in a statement but in an illustration of the working out of aesthetic principles in achieving "imaginary gardens with real toads in them."

All along, as one examines the animal poems, which in Miss Moore is not a group that make up one period of her career as a poet, but rather a lifelong preoccupation, one goes through the experience of seeing the "genuine" as distinguished from the "rawness" of the raw material. He sees operating in effect a perception that is highly individual in that it defies systematic classification and definitive analysis, but at the same time, representative of the modern tradition in that the individual perception is thoroughly merged with a perception of past and present civilization and of a style of art, the general features of which are peculiar to the twentieth century. The use of all sorts of material--legend, science, history, current theory, the quotidian--with which to create a poetic reality; the sense of animal nature as non-human, mindless, "a living unconsciousness"[72] that survives nevertheless in a world unmindful of it; and, on matters of technique, the insistence on "thingness" in the "genuine," aesthetic

distancing, a complete congruity in the obviously incongruous, the evocation of emotion from the precise fact, knowledge, and thought: all these place Miss Moore as a poet of this age.

This study of her animal imagery has been largely an attempt to draw out her individuality from within the representative.

## FOOTNOTES

### Introduction

[1]Rebecca Price Parkin, "Certain Difficulties in Reading Marianne Moore: Exemplified in her 'Apparition of Splendour,'" PMLA LXXXI (June 1966), p. 168.

[2]Cleanth Brooks, "Miss Marianne Moore's Zoo," Quarterly Review of Literature IV (1948), p. 178.

[3]Parkin, p. 167.

[4]Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1935), p. 8.

[5]Brooks, p. 178.

[6]Randall Jarrell, Poetry and the Age (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 199.

### Chapter I

[1]Brooks, p. 178.

[2]Miss Moore's collections of poems used in this paper are referred to by the following abbreviations: CP, Collected Poems; MMR, A Marianne Moore Reader; WAY, What Are Years; TMTM, Tell Me, Tell Me.

[3]Richard P. Blackmur, "The Method of Marianne Moore," Form and Value in Modern Poetry (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1957), p. 250.

[4]T. S. Eliot, Introduction to Selected Poems by Marianne Moore (New York: MacMillan, 1935), p. x.

[5]Hugh Kenner, "The Experience of the Eye: Marianne Moore's Tradition," The Southern Review I, new series (October, 1965), p. 765.

[6]Kenner, p. 765.

[7]Kenner, p. 767.

[8]Brooks, p. 178.

[9]Joseph Hillis Miller, Poets of Reality (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 11.

Chapter II

[1]Louise Bogan, "Reading Contemporary Poetry," College English XIV (February 1953), p. 260.

[2]Vivienne Koch, "The Peaceable Kingdom of Miss Moore," Quarterly Review of Literature IV (1948), pp. 153-154.

[3]Ralph Rees, "The Imagery of Marianne Moore" (Ph. D. dissertation, Pennsylvania University, 1956), p. 5.

[4]Rees, pp. 25-26.

[5]Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Vol. I (Chicago: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1966), p. 192.

[6]Encyclope dia Britannica (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1911), Vol. I, p. 689.

[7]Dictionary of World Literature, ed. by Joseph T. Shipley (Paterson, N. J.: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1964), p. 153. From here on this book will be indicated as DWL.

[8]DWL, p. 153.

[9]DWL, p. 153.

[10]DWL, p. 153.

[11]Jerome, commenting on the "unicorn" in the Book of Job (XXXIX) cited by Percy Ansell Robin, Animal Lore in English Literature (London: John Murry, 1932), p. 75.

[12]Thomas Bulfinch, Mythology (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., n. d.), p. 315.

[13]Physiologus, trans. Carlill (1927) cited by Robin, p. 75.

[14]T. H. White, ed. The Book of Beasts (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), p. 184.

[15]Holland quoted by Robin, p. 85.

[16]Robin, p. 90.

[17]Robin, p. 60.

[18]Published by Pitra, quoted by Carlill, Physiologus, cited by Robin, p. 164.

[19]White, p. 11.

[20]White, p. 28.

[21]White, pp. 8-9.

[22]Koch, p. 153.

[23]T. Newbigging, Fables and Fabulists, Ancient and Modern, pp. 7-8 as quoted by Sister Mary Carey, "The Poetry of Marianne Moore: A Study of Her Verse, Its Sources and Its Influence" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1959), p. 183.

[24]Marie Boroff, "Dramatic Structure in the Poetry of Marianne Moore," Literary Review (Fairleigh Dickinson University, Teaneck, N. J.) II (1958), pp. 112-123.

[25]Marie Boroff, "'Tom Fool at Jamaica' by Marianne Moore: Meaning and Structure," College English XVII (May 1956), p. 468.

[26]Erwin Panofsky, Albrecht Durer (Princeton: University Press, 1948), Vol. I, p. 192.

[27]George Goodwin and others, The Animal Kingdom(New York: Greystone Press, 1954), p. 355.

[28]Goodwin, p. 670.

[29]Parkin summarizing letters 48 and 49 of Goldsmith's The Citizen of the World, p. 171.

Chapter III

[1]"Best Living Poet," Newsweek XXXVIII (December 24, 1951), p. 69.

[2]Kathleen Raine, "The Symbol and the Rose," New York Times Book Review (January 20, 1952), pp. 4, 24.

[3]Jacques Maritain, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry (New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1953), p. 249 footnote.

[4]Austin Clarke, "Literature in Verse?" Spectator CLXXXVII (November 23, 1951), pp. 714-716.

[5]Morton D. Zabel, "A Literalist of the Imagination," Literary Opinion in America, Vol. I, ed. by M. D. Zabel (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 386.

[6]X. J. Kennedy, "Marianne Moore," Minnesota Review II (Fall 1961-Summer 1962), p. 370.

[7]M. L. Rosenthal, "Jubal, Jabal and Moore," New Republic (April 7, 1952), p. 21.

[8]T. S. Eliot, p. x.

[9]Marianne Moore as quoted by Winthrop Sargeant, "Profiles," New Yorker XXXII (February 16, 1957), p. 52.

[10]James Smetham, Letter to William Davis dated August 10, 1855 quoted by John L. Sweeney, "Poetic Power," Quarterly Review of Literature IV (1948), p. 171.

[11]John Ruskin, "Of the Pathetic Fallacy," Modern Painters, Vol. III (London: George Allen, 1904), p. 202.

[12]Ruskin, p. 209.

[13]T. E. Hulme, Speculations, ed. by Herbert Read (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949), pp. 113-140.

[14] Jean-Paul Sartre, What Is Literature? trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), pp. 8-9.

[15] Jack Spicer, "Letter to Lorca," included in "Statements on Poetics," The New American Poetry: 1945-1960 ed. by Donald M. Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1960), p. 413, quoted by A. Kingsley Weatherhead, The Edge of the Image (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), p. 12.

[16] William Carlos Williams, Selected Essays (New York: Random House, 1954), pp. 126-127.

[17] Wallace Stevens, "About One of Marianne Moore's Poems," The Necessary Angel (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), pp. 94-95.

[18] Wallace Stevens, "A Poet that Matters," Opus Posthumous (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), p. 236.

[19] W. P. Pycraft, "The Frilled Lizard," The Illustrated London News (February 6, 1932), p. 210.

[20] John J. Teal Jr., "Golden Fleece of the Arctic," Atlantic Monthly (March 1958).

[21] Webster's Third New International Dictionary, p. 372.

[22] Goodwin, p. 1311.

[23] Goodwin, p. 348.

[24] Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. XX, p. 677.

[25] Encyclopedia Americana (Montreal: Americana Corporation of Canada Ltd., 1963), Vol. XVIII, p. 218h.

[26] Encyclopedia Americana, Vol. XVIII, p. 218h.

[27] Teal, p. 81.

[28] Teal, p. 81.

[29] Teal, p. 77.

[30] Teal, pp. 77-78.

[31] William Van O'Connor, Sense and Sensibility in Modern Poetry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 230.

[32] Pycraft, p. 210.

[33] Pycraft, p. 210.

[34] Goodwin, p. 1248.

[35] Goodwin, p. 877.

[36] Stevens, Opus Posthumous, p. 251.

[37] Stevens, The Necessary Angel, p. 95.

[38] Wolfgang Kayser, The Grotesque in Art and Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), p. 182.

[39] Jarrell, p. 180.

[40] Marianne Moore quoted by Sargeant, pp. 48-49.

[41] Maritain, p. 330.

[42] Philip Wheelwright, Metaphor and Reality (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 81.

[43] Alfred Tennyson, Poetic and Dramatic Works (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1898), p. 783.

[44] William Carlos Williams, Autobiography (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 390.

[45] Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Poetry (New York; Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960), pp. 91-93.

[46] Robert Langbaum, "The New Nature Poetry," American Scholar XXVIII (Summer 1959), pp. 324-333.

[47] Robert Frost, Complete Poems (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1949), pp. 369-366.

[48] Kenneth Burke, "Motives and Motifs in the Poetry of Marianne Moore," A Grammar of Motives (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1954), p. 488.

[49] Stanley Coffmann, Imagism: A Chapter of the History of Modern Poetry (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), p. 223.

[50] Ezra Pound, Literary Essays, ed. by T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 3.

[51] Pound, p. 6.

[52] Hilda Doolittle, Collected Poems (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925), p. 81.

[53] Ruskin, p. 206.

[54] Wallace Stevens, Collected Poems (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 304.

[55] William Joseph Rooney, "'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves,'--a Contrasting Method by Evaluation," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XIII (June 1955), p. 513.

[56] Stevens, Collected Poems, pp. 8-9.

[57] Stevens, Collected Poems, pp. 20, 93, 92, 75, 216-217, 209-210, 78, 193; Opus Posthumous, pp. 97-98.

[58] Kayser, p. 184.

[59] Stevens, Collected Poems, p. 154.

[60] Williams, Autobiography, p. 390.

[61] William Carlos Williams, Selected Poems (New York: New Directions, 1949), p. 54.

[62] Randall Jarrell, Introduction to Selected Poems of Williams, p. xvi.

[63] Jarrell, Introduction to Selected Poems of Williams, p. xiii.

[64]Margaret Anderson, ed. Little Review Anthology (New York: Hermitage House, 1953), p. 187.

[65]Eugene Davidson, "Some American Poets," Yale Review, XXIV new series (Summer 1935), p. 849.

[66]Maritain, p. 249 footnote.

[67]Ezra Pound, "Marianne Moore and Mina Loy," Little Review Anthology ed. by Margaret Anderson (New York: Hermitage House, 1953), p. 188.

[68]Eliot, p. xi.

[69]Ruskin, pp. 210-211.

[70]Hulme, pp. 119-120.

[71]Zabel, p. 389.

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